BX 7117 .J3 1860 v.8
James, John Angell, 1785-1859.
The works of John Angell James

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

VOL. XIII.

THE CHRISTIAN FATHER'S PRESENT TO HIS CHILDREN.

ADDRESSES TO YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATIONS.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & CO.
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.
MDCCCLXII.

COUNSELS ADDRESSED TO MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

BY

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THE CHRISTIAN FATHER'S PRESENT TO HIS CHILDREN.

The Author made many alterations in the last edition of "The Christian Father's Present to his Children," and subjoined to each chapter a prayer to be presented after reading it. This edition has been followed; there were however omitted in it two chapters which are here added at the end of the work; and an address to parents, which has been transposed to the twelfth volume.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

As a Christian, the Author of the following volumes believes that there is a state of everlasting happiness prepared beyond the grave for those, and those only, who are partakers of pure and undefiled religion: and, as a parent, he will freely confess his supreme solicitude is, that his children, by a patient continuance in well doing, may seek for glory, honour, immortality; and finally possess themselves of eternal life. He is not insensible of the worth of temporal advantages; he is neither cynic nor ascetic; he appreciates the true value of wealth, learning, science, and reputation, and he desires them, in such measure as God shall see fit, both for himself and his children; though he has conquered the world, he does not despise it; while he resists its yoke as a master, he values its ministrations as a servant. But still he views the present state of sublunary affairs as a splendid pageant, the fashion of which passes away, to give place to the glory which shall never be moved: he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." It is on this ground that he attaches so much importance to a religious education. To those, if such there are, who imagine that he is too anxious about

this matter, and has said too much about it, he has simply to reply, that "he believes, therefore has he spoken." The man who does not make the religious character of his children the supreme end of all his conduct towards them, may profess to believe as a Christian, but certainly acts as an atheist: besides, if this end be secured, the most likely step is taken for accomplishing every other, as "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come."

With these views, the Author has embodied in the following volume his own parental wishes, objects, and pursuits. Much that is here written, has been the subject of his personal converse with his children, and should God spare his life, will still continue to be the topics of his instruction.

What is beneficial to his own family, the Author thought might be no less useful to others: and this was another reason which induced him to publish. The multiplication of books of this kind, even if they make small pretensions to classic elegance of composition, is to be looked upon as a benefit, provided they contain sound scriptural sentiments, and an obvious tendency to produce right moral impressions. Books are sometimes read merely because they are new; it is desirable therefore to gratify this appetite for novelty, when at the same time we can strengthen and build up the moral character by a supply of wholesome and nutritious food. Nor is it always necessary that new books should contain new topics, or new modes of illustration, any more than it is necessary that there should be a perpetual change in the kinds of food, in order to attain to bodily strength. Whatever varieties may be introduced bread will still

remain the staff of life. So there are some primitive truths and subjects, which, whatever novelties and curiosities may be introduced for the gratification of religious taste, must still be repeated, as essential to the formation of religious character.

The Author has not selected the sermonic form of discussion, because some of his subjects did not admit of it: and also because sermons are perhaps the least inviting species of reading to young people. Letters would not have been liable to these objections; but upon the whole, he preferred the form of chapters in which the style of direct address is preserved. The advantage of this style is obvious; it not only keeps up the reader's interest, but, as every parent who presents these volumes to his children adopts the advice as his own, such young persons, by an easy effort of the imagination, lose sight of the Author, and read the language of their own father. If any thing is necessary to secure this effect, beyond the simple act of presenting the book, it may be immediately obtained by an inscription to the child, written by the parent's own hand upon the fly-leaf.

The Author scarcely need say that his work is not intended for young people below the age of fourteen. In the composition of the book, a seeming tautology sometimes occurs: what is just touched upon in one place, is more expanded in others: and some subjects are intentionally repeated. To give additional interest to the volume, numerous extracts and some anecdotes are introduced, which tend to relieve the dulness of didactic composition, and prevent the tedium of unvarying monotony.

In the references which the Author has given to

books, both in the chapter on that subject and in notes, he does not wish to be considered as laying down, much less as limiting a course of reading for young people; but as simply directing them to some works, which among others ought by no means to be neglected.

Once more let it be stated, and stated with all possible emphasis, that the chief design of this work, is to form the religious character of its readers, and to implant those virtues which shall live, and flourish, and dignify, and delight, infinite ages after every object that is dear to avarice or pride, to learning or science, to taste or ambition, shall have perished in the conflagration of the universe.

Edgbaston,
April, 1824.

THE PREFACE TO THE NINETEENTH EDITION.

It is a satisfaction to me in looking back upon a pastorate of more than half a century's duration, to recollect how much of my labour, both in the pulpit and by the press, has been devoted to the spiritual welfare of the young. In addition to an annual address to them, through that long period, I have frequently delivered courses of sermons to the youth of both sexes. The last two of these have been published under the titles of "The Young Man's Guide through Life to Immortality," and "Female Piety, or the Young Woman's Guide to Immortality." Of those two volumes, some of the topics will of necessity be found to have been touched upon in this; and I therefore thought of letting the one I now again send forth, go out of print. I was induced, however, to alter my purpose by two reasons. First: Both works continue to be in demand; the sale of the earlier one being scarcely diminished by the publication of the latter. Secondly: They differ in some measure from each other, both in the subject matter, and in the class of persons for whom they are intended; the first being designed generally for those in an earlier stage of youth; and the second, with the exception of the first chapter, for those more

advanced. Moreover, this work is supposed to be given as a present by a parent to his children, and the other to be purchased by the young themselves. Not that they are, or ought to be, in the selection of their books, left solely to the self-promptings of youth. Multitudes of anxious parents have given to their sons and daughters, "The Guide to Immortality," as a sequel to this volume.

February 23, 1857.

INTRODUCTION.

COUNSELS AND DIRECTIONS TO THE READER.

Do not take up this book as you would a tale, history, or poem, with the idea and expectation of being amused by it, but as containing momentous truth which concerns you as an immortal being. Consent to be serious while you read it, and read it thoughtfully: and recollect that, as a rational, moral, and ever-living creature, you should desire to be instructed, guided and improved, in regard to the highest of all your interests, relations, and duties, those which refer to God and eternity.

Choose a time for perusing it when you are at leisure, and can be alone; and when you can, unobserved, pause, put down the book, and ponder what you have read.

Never read more than one chapter at a sitting. It is not reading much, but reading well, (that is, with attention, reflection, and self-application,) that will do you good. Each chapter will furnish matter for much meditation.

Sincerely and devoutly offer up the prayer with which the book commences, and the prayer at the end of each chapter; and enlarge upon them as your heart

may dictate at the time. Recollect any blessing on the perusal must come from God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed: and therefore let the perusal of this book be begun, continued, and ended in Him.

Determine as you go on, and as God shall assist you, to put in immediate practice what you read. Rise from your knees in prayer to appropriate action.

As the form of direct address is maintained throughout the volume, imagine that in every place where the words "My children" occur, they are spoken to you by your own parents; and that in every chapter, and every sentence, you hear a pious father and an anxious praying mother, addressing you at that moment.

Recollect that as you must give account, in the day of judgment for all your advantages, and the aids for a religious life which are bestowed upon you and placed within your reach, so your responsibility will be increased by the perusal of this work.

And now, my Young Readers, I commend you to God and the word of his grace, and pray earnestly that I may be the instrument by this little volume of leading you by patient continuance in well doing, to "Seek for glory, honour, and immortality," and you will then obtain eternal life. This has been the case with many who have read the eighteen editions which have been already published. Some are now in heaven, who read it thirty years ago when it was first sent forth; and others are following them to glory, through a course of holiness, usefulness, and happiness on earth, whom I hope to meet as my joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of Christ. The thirty years that have passed since the book was first written, have only served to

convince me more deeply, and to enforce by longer experience my reasoning as to the necessity, the reality, and the value of true religion. I am now an old man, and shall leave this, among some other literary legacies, to the youth of the coming generations. Receive, then, the testimony of the aged man who now addresses you, and who assures you in the evening of his days, that amidst the recollections of the past, the reflections of the present, and the bright anticipations of the future, it is a cause for daily thankfulness that he is enabled to say, "I feared the Lord from my youth." Yes, to religion I owe by God's grace, all I am and all I have. A life of piety, which, I hope in some, though in too small, measure, I have maintained, has led to a life of some usefulness; and both these together, to a life of much enjoyment, though not unmixed with much affliction. Permit me to assume the character and relation of a father to all who shall read this volume, and say in the language of the apostle, "My little children, for whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you: I have no greater joy than to hear that you walk in the truth. O remember your Creator in the days of your youth; and as I believe many of you will read this work after I have entered upon my eternal rest, may you so read it as to be led by it to Christ and glory; and then you and I shall meet in heaven and make the subjects to which it refers the themes of our intercourse through eternal ages."

A PRAYER TO BE OFFERED BEFORE THE BOOK IS READ.

Almighty and most merciful God, my Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, the fountain of all wisdom and grace, I sincerely thank thee that thou hast made me a rational and immortal creature, capable of knowing, loving, and serving thee, the author of my being, and the source of my happiness. I bow down with deep humility before thy throne of mercy, confessing my great and manifold transgressions; for I have been a sinner against thee in various ways. O remember not against me the sins of my youth, but for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, who died, the just for the unjust, and bore our sins in his body on the cross, blot out my iniquities and receive me to thy favour, as thine adopted child. And as my nature is corrupt, renew it by thy Holy Spirit, and help me to walk in the way of thy commandments, and incline my heart to keep thy statutes. May I be enabled to remember thee my Creator in the days of my youth. Assist me to make the salvation of my soul the chief end of my existence.

I bless thy holy name for all the means of grace with which in such abundance I am favoured, for aiding me in the pursuit of eternal life, especially for the sacred scriptures, the ministry of the gospel, and the Christian Sabbath: vouchsafe to me thy blessing upon the use of all these, that I may become wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

I would not be unthankful for those subsidiary aids to spiritual religion, which are furnished by the writings of good men. And as I am now about to peruse a book, written for the godly edification of persons of my age, and placed in my hands with many prayers by my anxious parents, I humbly and earnestly beseech thee of thy great mercy, to bless the perusal of it to the benefit of my immortal soul: and thus may the end for which it is given to me be answered in my eternal salvation. May it lead me into those habits, which will prepare me for both worlds, this and the next. Dispose me to find time to peruse it: give me a quick understanding, an humble and docile spirit, and a retentive memory: enable me so to fix my attention upon its contents, as clearly to comprehend them, and constantly to practise them: that so by thy blessing upon this book, I may become a true Christian, a useful man, a comfort to my parents, a member of thy church, and a blessing to the world.

Grant this, I humbly beseech thee, most gracious God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Mediator and Advocate with thee, the Father; to whom be all honour and glory. Amen.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANXIETY OF A CHRISTIAN PARENT FOR THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF HIS CHILDREN.

My Dear Children,

Never did I pass a more truly solemn or interesting moment, than that in which my first-born child was put into my arms, and when I felt that I was a father. A new solicitude was then produced in my bosom, which every succeeding day has tended to confirm and strengthen. I looked up to heaven and breathed over my babe the petition of Abraham for his son, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." Recognising, in the little helpless being which had been so lately introduced into our world, a creature born for eternity, and who, when the sun shall be extinguished, would be still soaring in heaven, or sinking in hell, I returned to the closet of my private devotion, and solemnly dedicated the child to that God who had given me the precious boon; and earnestly prayed, that whatever might be his lot in this world, he might be a partaker of true piety, and numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

You cannot doubt, my children, that your parents love you. In all your recollections, we have a witness to this. We have, as you know, done every thing to

promote your welfare, and so far as was compatible with this object, your pleasure also. We have never denied you a gratification which our duty and ability allowed us to impart; and if at any time we have been severe in reproof, even this was an awful form of love. We have spared no expense in your education; in short, love, an intense love, of which you can at present form no adequate conception, has been the secret spring of all our conduct towards you; and as the strongest proof, and purest effort of our affection, we wish you to be partakers of true piety. Did we not cherish this anxiety, we should feel, that amidst every other expression of regard, we were acting towards you a most cruel and unnatural part. Genuine love desires and seeks for the objects on which it is fixed the greatest benefits of which they are capable; and as you have a capacity to serve, enjoy, and glorify God by true religion, how can we love you in reality, if we do not covet for you this high and holy distinction? We should feel that our love had exhausted itself upon trifles, and had let go objects of immense, infinite, eternal consequence, if it were not to concentrate all its prayers, desires, and efforts on your personal religion.

Almost every parent has some one object which he desires above all others on behalf of his children. Some are anxious that their offspring may shine as warriors; others that theirs may be surrounded with the milder radiance of literary, scientific, or commercial fame. Our supreme ambition for you is, that whatever situation you occupy, you may adorn it with the beauties of holiness, and discharge its duties under the influence of Christian principles. Much as we desire your respectability in life, (and we will not conceal our hope that

you will not occupy a mean place in society;) yet we would rather see you in the most obscure and even menial situation, provided you were partakers of true piety, than behold you on the loftiest pinnacle of the temple of fame, the objects of universal admiration, if at the same your hearts were destitute of the fear of God. We might indeed, in the latter case, be tempted to watch your ascending progress, and hear the plaudits with which your elevation was followed, with something of a parent's vanity; but when we retired from the dazzling scene to the seat of serious reflection, the spell would be instantly broken, and we should sorrowfully exclaim, "Alas! my son, what is all this, in the absence of religion, but soaring high to have the greater fall!"

You must be aware, my dear children, that all our conduct towards you, has been conducted upon these principles. Before you were capable of receiving instruction, we presented ceaseless prayer to God for your personal piety. As soon as reason dawned, we poured the light of religious instruction upon your mind, by the aid of familiar poetry, catechisms, and conversation. You cannot remember the time when these efforts commenced. How often have you retired with us to become the subjects of our earnest supplications at the throne of grace! You have been the witnesses of our agony for your eternal welfare. Have we not instructed, warned, admonished, encouraged you, as we laid open to your view the narrow path which leads to eternal life? Have we not been guided by this object in the selection of schools for your education, companions for your amusement, books for your perusal? Has not this been so interwoven with all our conduct, that if at any time you had been asked the question, "What is the chief

object of your parents' solicitude on your account?" you must have said at once, "For my being truly pious." Yes, my children, this is most strictly true. At home, abroad, in sickness and in health, in prosperity, and in adversity, this is the ruling solicitude of our bosoms.

How intently have we marked the developement of your character, to see if our fondest wishes were likely to be gratified! We have observed your deportment under the sound of the gospel, and when you have appeared listless and uninterested, it has been as wormwood in our cup: while, on the other hand, when we have seen you listening with attention, quietly wiping away the tear of emotion, or retiring pensive and serious to your closet, we have rejoiced more than they which find great spoil. When we have looked on the conduct of any pious youth, we have uttered the wish, "O that my child were like him!" and have directed your attention to his character, as that which we wished you to make the model of your own. When, on the other hand, we have witnessed the behaviour of some prodigal son, who has been the grief of his parents, the thought has been like a dagger to our heart, "What if my child should turn out thus!"

1. Now we cherish all this solicitude on our own account. We candidly assure you that nothing short of this will make us happy. Your piety is the only thing that will make us rejoice that we are parents. How can we endure to see our children choosing any other ways than those of wisdom, and any other path than that of life? How could we bear the sight, to behold you travelling along the broad road which leads to destruction, and running with the multitude to do evil? "O God, hide us from this sad spectacle in the

grave, and ere that time comes, take us to our rest." But how would it embitter our last moments, and plant our dying pillow with thorns, to leave you on earth in an unconverted state; following us to the grave, but not to heaven. Or should you be called to die before us, and take possession of the tomb in our names, how could we stand at "the dreadful post of observation, darker every hour," without one ray of hope for you, to cheer our wretched spirits? How could we sustain the dreadful thought, which in spite of ourselves would sometimes steal across the bosom, that the very next moment after you had passed beyond our kind attentions, you would be received to the torments which know neither end nor mitigation? And when you had departed under such circumstances, what could heal our wounds or dry our tears?

Should you become truly pious, that circumstance will impart to our bosoms a felicity which no language could enable me to describe. It will sweeten all our intercourse with you, establish our confidence, allay our fears, awaken our hopes. If we are prosperous, it will delight us to think that we are not acquiring wealth for those who will squander it on their lusts, but who will employ it for the glory of God when we are in the dust. Or if we are poor, it will cheer us to reflect, that though we cannot leave you the riches of this world, we see you in possession of the favour of God, a portion which, after comforting you on earth, will enrich you through eternity. My dear children, if you are anxious to comfort the hearts of your parents, if you would fulfil our joy, if you would repay all our labour, anxiety, affection; if you would most effectually discharge all the obligations which you cannot deny you owe us,

Fear God, and choose the ways of religion: this, this only will make us happy.

2. We cherish this solicitude on behalf of the church, and the cause of God. We see every year conveyed to the tombs of their fathers, some valued and valuable members of the christian church. We are perpetually called to witness the desolations of the last enemy in the garden of the Lord. How often do we exclaim over the corpse of some eminent Christian and benefactor, "Departed saint, how heavy the loss we have sustained by thy removal to a better state! Who now shall fill up thy vacant seat, and bless like thee both the church and the world?" My children, under these bereavements to whom should we look but to you? To whom should we turn but to the children of the kingdom, for subjects of the kingdom? You are the property of the church. It has a claim upon you. Will ye not own it, and discharge it? Must we see the walls of the spiritual house mouldering away, and you, the rightful materials with which it should be repaired, withheld? We love the church, we long for its prosperity, we pray for its increase, and it cannot but be deeply distressing to us to witness the ravages of death, and, at the same time, to see the want of religion in those young persons whose parents during their life filled places of honour and usefulness in the fellowship of the faithful.

We are anxious for your being pious that you may be the instruments of blessing the world by the propagation of religion. The moral condition of the world is too bad for description. If it be ever improved, it must be by Christians. True piety is the only reformer of mankind. A spirit of active benevolence has happily risen up, rich in purposes and means for the benefit

of the human race. But the men in whose bosoms it now lives and moves are not immortal upon earth: they too must sleep in dust, and who then shall succeed them at their post and enter into their labours? Who will catch their falling mantle, and carry on their glorious undertaking for the salvation of millions? If it ever be done, it must be done of course by those who are now rising into life. The propagation of religion to the next generation, and to distant nations, depends on you, and on others of your age. While I write, the groans of creation are ascending, and future ages are rising up to plead with you, that you would bow to the influence of religion, as the only way of extending it to them.

3. But we are chiefly anxious, after all, on your account. My children, the anxiety which we feel on this head, is far too intense for language. Here I may truly say, "poor is thought, and poor expression." If piety were to be obtained for you only by purchase, and I were rich in the possession of worlds, I would beggar myself to the last farthing to render you a Christian, and think the purchase cheap. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." As I shall have more than one chapter on the advantages of piety, it will not be necessary to enlarge upon them here, any further than to say, that true godliness will save you from much present danger and inconvenience, promote your temporal interests, prepare you for the darkest scenes of adversity, comfort you on a dying bed, and finally conduct you to everlasting glory. The want of it will ensure the reverse of all this. Sooner or later such a destitution will bring misery on earth, and be followed with eternal torments in hell.

What then, my children, are all worldly acquirements and possessions without piety? What are the accomplishments of taste, the elegances of wealth, the wreaths of fame, but as a fragrant and many-coloured garland adorning a miserable victim about to be sacrificed at the shrine of this world? Original genius, a vigorous understanding, a well stored mind, all adorned by the most amiable temper, and most insinuating address, will neither comfort under the trials of life, nor save their lovely possessor from the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched. Oh! no; they may qualify for earth, but not for heaven. Alas, alas! that such estimable qualities should all perish for want of that piety which alone can give immortality and perfection to the excellences of the human character?

Can you wonder then at the solicitude we feel for your personal religion, when such interests are involved in this momentous concern?

PRAYER.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the giver of every good and perfect gift, I most heartily thank thee for parents, who are not only solicitous for my welfare in this world, but for my eternal happiness in the world to come. I bless thee for their holy example, their pious instructions, and their earnest prayers: and that while many young persons are left to grow up without any care being taken, or any anxiety felt, by their parents, for their spiritual good, mine have been active and desirous for my eternal well-being. I bless thee for my kind and tender mother, who from the dawn of reason has communicated, as I was able to receive it, religious instruction: and for my father's counsels, care, and watchfulness. I have heard their fervent supplications for my early piety; and have been the witness of their deep solicitude. Oh let me not, I beseech

thee, disappoint their hopes, and embitter their lives, by the neglect of true godliness. I was my father's son, tenderly and only beloved in the sight of my mother. O let me not be a foolish son that is a grief to his father, and a bitterness to her that bare him; but the wise son that maketh a glad father. Dispose my heart to the ways of godliness, that I may know the God of my father. Let me be brought to sympathise with my parents in all their religious views, feelings, and conduct, that I may be happy in myself, and be doubly blessed by blessing them also. May I, through thy rich grace, be assisted to reward their anxious endeavours after my salvation, by crowning them with success: and thus not only comfort them, but be an example to my brothers and sisters. Hear me for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

THE DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH WE SHOULD ENTER UPON AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF RELIGION.

Religion is a subject of a spiritual and moral nature, and therefore requires a different frame of mind to that which we carry to a topic purely intellectual.

1. The first disposition essentially necessary, is a deep seriousness. Religion is the very last thing in the universe with which we should allow ourselves to trifle. Nothing can be more shocking and incongruous than the flippancy and inconsiderateness with which some people treat this dread theme. When Uzzah put forth his hand in haste to support the ark, his life paid the forfeit of his temerity: and if the man, who takes up his Bible to inquire into the meaning of its contents with a frivolous and volatile temper, do not suffer the same penalty, it is not because the action is less criminal, or less dangerous, but because God has now removed the punishment to a greater distance from the sin. I cannot conceive of any thing more likely to provoke God to give a person up to the bewildering influence of his own inherent depravity, and consequently to a confused and erroneous perception of religious truth, than this temper. To see a person

approaching the Oracle of God with the levity with which a votary of fashion and folly enters a place of amusement, is indeed revolting to taste, to say nothing of more sacred feelings. Religion, enthroned behind the veil in the temple of truth, and dwelling amidst brightness which the merely curious eye cannot look upon, refuses to unfold her glories, or discover her secrets, to the volatile mind; and delivers to every one who draws near to her abode, the admonition of Jehovah to Moses, "Put off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The subjects treated of by religion, are of the most awfully important nature. Every thing about it is serious. The eternal God, in every view of his nature and operations; the Lord Jesus Christ, in his sufferings and death; the soul of man, in its ruin and salvation; the solemnities of judgment, the mysteries of eternity, the felicities of heaven, the torments of hell, are all involved in the mighty comprehension of religion. Should such themes be ever touched with irreverence? My dear children, I warn you against the too common practice of reducing to the level of mere intellectual theories, and of treating with the same unconcern as the systems of philosophy, that sacred volume, which, to use the words of Locke, "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its contents." Do not forget, then, that the very first requisite, not only in religion itself, but also in that frame of mind which enables us to understand its nature, is seriousness.

2. A great solicitude to be guided aright, is the next disposition, and nearly allied to the former. Eternal consequences hang upon the question. According as we mistake it, or understand it, we shall travel onward

to heaven, or to hell. An inquiry of such importance should, of course, be urged with the deepest anxiety. It might be rationally expected, that events so awfully tremendous as death and judgment; a subject so deeply interesting as whether we shall spend eternal ages in torments or in bliss, could in no possible case, and in no constitution of mind whatever, fail of exciting the most serious apprehension and concern. And yet there are multitudes who have talked a thousand times about religion, but yet have never had in all their lives one hour's real solicitude, to know whether their views of its nature are correct. Is it to be wondered at then, that so many remain in ignorance, or plunge into error?

3. Docility, or a teachable disposition, is of great consequence. Our Lord laid great emphasis on this, when he said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Children, when they first go to school, have a sense of their own ignorance; they have neither prepossessions nor prejudices; they present their unfurnished minds to their teachers to receive, with implicit confidence, all that they are taught. Docility is essential to improvement in every thing; for if a child go to school puffed up with high notions of his own attainments, imagining that he knows as much as his master can teach him, and with a disposition to cavil at every thing that is communicated; in this case, improvement is out of the question; the avenues of knowledge are closed. In nothing is docility more necessary than in religion, where the subject is altogether beyond the cognizance of the senses, and the discoveries of reason. Christianity is purely and exclusively matter of revelation.

All our knowledge on this topic must be derived from the Bible; to the right understanding of which, we must carry the same consciousness of our ignorance, the same destitution of prejudice and prepossession, the same implicit submission of the understanding, as the child on his first going to school does to his instructor. We must go to the Word of God with these convictions in our mind: "This is the master, from whom I, who know nothing, am most implicitly to receive all things. My teacher is infallible, and I am not to cavil at his instructions, however, in some things, they may transcend my ability to comprehend them."

Yes, the Bible, the Bible alone, is the infallible teacher in religious matters, from whose authority there does and can lie no appeal; before whose solemn dicta reason must bow in humble silence, to learn and to obey. This is docility, by which I mean, not a supple disposition to believe what others believe, or to adopt the creed which they would impose upon us: no, this is surrendering our understanding to be enslaved by human authority: but docility means going direct to the Master, with the determination, whatever he teaches I will believe, be it as sublime, as humiliating, as novel, and, to my present limited capacities as incomprehensible, as it may.

Are we, then, to exclude reason from the business of religion? By no means. It would be as absurd to attempt it, as it would be impossible to accomplish it. The whole affair of piety is a process of reason; but it is reason submitting itself to the guidance of revelation. Reason bears the same relation to religion, and performs the same office, as it does in the system of jurisprudence; it examines the evidence by which a law is proved to be

an enactment of the legislature; interprets, according to the known use of terms and phrases, its right meaning, and then submits to its authority. Thus, in matters of religion, its province is to examine the evidences by which the Bible is proved to be a revelation from God; having done this, it is to ascertain, according to the fixed use of language, its true meaning; and to submit to its authority, by believing whatever it reveals, and obeying whatever it enjoins. This is what I mean by prostrating our reason before the tribunal of revelation, than which surely nothing can more accord with the design of the Bible, or the ignorance of the human mind.

But, suppose that reason should meet with palpable contradictions in the word of God, is she to believe them? This is putting a case which cannot happen, since it is supposing that God will give his sanction to a lie. There can be no contradictions in the word of God; the thing is impossible. But still it will be replied, Is not one kind of evidence for the divine authority of revelation, derived from its contents; and if so, may not reason make the nature of a doctrine the test of its truth? At best this is but a secondary species of evidence, and cannot oppose the primary kind of proof. If it cannot be proved that a doctrine is really an interpolation, and if there be at the same time all the evidence that the case admits of, that it is a part of divine revelation, no difficulty in the way of understanding its meaning, no seeming mystery in its nature, should lead us to reject it; we must receive it, and wait for further light to understand it. Revelation is the sun, reason the eye which receives its beams: and it can no more be said

that revelation destroys or degrades reason, by guiding it, than it can be said the solar orb renders the faculty of vision useless. Docility then, my dear children, by which I mean, a submission of the human understanding in matters of religion to the word of God, is essential to all true piety. I insist upon this with more earnestness, because it is easy to perceive the tendency of the present age is in an opposite direction. A haughty and flippant spirit has arisen, which under the pretext of freedom of inquiry, has discovered a restless propensity to throw off the authority of divine truth; a spirit more disposed to condemn the Bible than to be taught by it; to speculate upon what it should be, than to receive it as it is; a spirit which would receive the morality of the word of God as it finds it, but which is perpetually employed in mending its theology; which, in fact, would subvert the true order of things, and instead of subjecting reason to revelation, would make reason the teacher, and revelation the pupil. Beware, my children, of this dangerous spirit, which, while it pays flattering compliments to your understanding, is injecting the deadliest poison into your soul.

4. A prayerful spirit is essential to a right disposition for enquiring into the nature of true piety. Religion is an affair so spiritual in its nature, so tremendously important in its consequences, and so frequently misunderstood; and, on the other hand, we ourselves are so liable to be misled in our judgments by the bewildering influence of internal depravity and external temptation, that it betrays the most criminal indifference, or the most absurd self-confidence, to enter on this subject, without constant, earnest supplication for direction,

to the Father and Fountain of lights. The religious world is like an immense forest, through which lies the right road to truth and happiness; but besides this, there are innumerable paths running in all directions: every way has its travellers, each traveller thinks he is right, and attempts to prove it, by referring to the map which he carries in his hand. In such circumstances, who that values his soul or her eternal salvation, would not seek for guidance to Him who has promised to disclose to us by his Spirit the path of life? When young people trust to the efforts of their own unaided reason, and neglect to ask for the guiding influence of the eternal God, it is matter of little surprise that they are found walking in the paths of error. There is a degree of pride and independence in this, which God often punishes, by leaving them to the seductions of sophistry and falsehood. In addition, then, to the greatest seriousness of mind, and the most intense desire after truth, and the most unprejudiced approach to the oracle of scripture, pray constantly to God to reveal to you the nature of true piety, and to dispose you to embrace it. This is the way appointed by God to obtain it. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto them which are your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." These, with a thousand other passages of similar import, are surely sufficient to enjoin and encourage the temper I now recommend. I have no hope of those who neglect

habitual prayer for divine illumination. I expect to see them left to embrace error for truth, or to content themselves with the mere forms of godliness, instead of its power.

PRAYER.

O most merciful God, I know that the way of man is not in himself, nor is it in man that walketh to direct his steps. Help me, I beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit, in the matters that come before me in this chapter. Religion I know is the all-important subject for my consideration, as an immortal creature going on to eternity. Being aware of the vast importance of coming to the investigation of such a subject with right dispositions, and how difficult it is with such a corrupt nature as mine to collect my thoughts, do thou subdue my prejudices, and keep my mind in a proper state for inquiry. I humbly invoke the aid of thy Holy Spirit, that I may follow the directions laid down in this chapter, and considering that it is a matter between God and my soul, a matter of life and death, a matter concerning heaven, hell, salvation, and eternity, may I be deeply, devoutly serious, anxious to be guided aright, teachable in my spirit, and earnestly prayerful in all my inquiries. Let me not lean to my own understanding. Help me to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine I speak whether it be of God. Let there be nothing light and trifling in the disposition with which I approach this theme, remembering that the truth is too sacred a thing to be discovered to him who enters upon the inquiry in a spirit of levity. Enlighten my understanding; subdue my will; impress my heart, and give me a tender conscience. Prepare me to embrace the truth, however humbling to the pride of reason, or whatever sacrifices it shall require. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

THE NECESSITY OF RIGHT SENTIMENTS IN RELIGION.

TRUTH and error, my children, are essentially distinct, and diametrically opposed to each other. It is important to perceive in every case this difference, that we may embrace the one, and reject the other. To have the judgment misled in its decisions on any subject, is an evil, which, as rational creatures, we should ever deprecate; but to be mistaken on that subject, as to which "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," is most fearful, most fatal. To be in error on the topics of literature, science, commerce, history, is a mere inconvenience, at worst a derogation from our mental reputation or our worldly comfort; but to be fundamentally wrong in religion, is an evil which commences its chief mischief from the day of our death, and perpetuates it through all the ages of eternity.

I need not inform you, that there prevails an endless variety of opinions on the subject of religion. This circumstance, however it may be matter of regret with pious minds, is no cause of surprise with philosophic ones. Infidels who profess to study theology in the book of nature, are divided into many sects. Scarcely

a subject exists, however plain and apparently incapable of producing a diversity of opinion, but is viewed by different men in various lights. What clashing opinions exist amongst lawyers, concerning the precise meaning of the words of a statute, which was drawn up with the most anxious care to avoid any uncertainty. That different opinions should exist on the meaning of the scriptures, is less to be wondered at, when we consider how deeply we are all interested in the matter of revelation, and how apt we are in cases of personal interest to have our judgments biassed by our feelings. The Bible, if it could be read in heaven by holy angels and spirits made perfect, would produce no discordant opinions there. It is to the depravity of human nature that all religious error is to be traced.

Diversity of sentiment, although confessedly an evil, has been productive of some benefits. It has afforded opportunity for the more vigorous exercise and conspicuous display of Christian charity and forbearance between the various sects; while it is a constant pledge for the purity of the sacred text. As they all profess to draw their opinions from the Bible, they maintain a constant and sleepless jealousy over each other's treatment of the word of God. Their opposition to each other, converts them all into vigilant guardians of the source of their faith; so that although they have corrupted the streams of truth, they have jointly guarded the purity of the fountain. The suspicion of any liberties having been taken with the word of God, would be an evil more to be deplored than the existence of a diversity of opinion on the sacred text. While the genuineness of the statute is admitted, and the incorruptibility of the judge is maintained, the wranglings

of counsellors, about the meaning of terms and phrases, cannot subvert the foundations of justice.

Still, however, these opposite sentiments cannot of course be all right. Although error is multiform, truth is uniform; and it is of infinite consequence, that we should embrace the one and reject the other.

1. Some errors unquestionably exclude a man from salvation. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Now, it is certainly evident from this language, that salvation is suspended on a belief of the gospel; and of course upon a belief of the true gospel, not on the belief of a false one. If, therefore, what we believe is not the same as that which the word of God reveals, it is not the gospel; and such a faith will not save us. To ascertain with precision what truths are essential to the hope of eternal life, is a very difficult task: to say how far a person may go in error, and yet after all be saved, is what no mortal should presume to do. When a man however disbelieves the Bible to be the word of God, rejects the doctrine of the atonement, and the justification of the soul by faith, or the necessity of Divine influence to renew and sanctify the heart, and the obligation of true holiness; I do not see how such an individual can be saved. He subverts the very foundations of the gospel. Something must be believed, as our Lord himself tells us, in order to the possession of everlasting happiness; and if these things may be disbelieved, and yet a sinner be saved, it is difficult to find out what there is left for him to believe. If some sentiments then are essential to a saving faith, we should be most tremblingly afraid of error; and as it not for us to say how far an individual may go in error in order to be excluded from the

blessings of the gospel, we should certainly be alarmed at the least deviation from the truth, as there is no doubt that one wrong notion prepares the mind for the reception of another.

2. All error has a tendency to pollute the mind to the degree in which it exists, and therefore must be so far sinful. "Sanctify them by thy truth," saith our Lord, "thy word is truth." Now if truth sanctifies, error must corrupt the mind; except two causes so diametrically opposite to each other, as these are, can be supposed to produce the same effects; which is absurd. Whatever is not truth must be error. Whatever opinion we profess to have received from the word of God, must be classed under one or other of these heads, and must have some influence or other upon our religious character as it appears in the sight of God. Wrong sentiments may not produce immorality in the life; but if they corrupt our secret motives; if they render us spiritually proud, and lead us to glory before God; if they make us self-confident and dependent; if they cause us to lean to our own understanding; if they lead us to look with contempt upon others; if they keep us from using any means of grace instituted by God, they pollute and injure the mind in the sight of its Omniscient Creator. The least disease in the body, although it be unobserved by others, and be unfelt by the subject of it, is an injury to the health. It may never come to a fatal attack, or bring on death, but still it is injurious to the frame: and it is precisely thus with error in the mind.

All religion is founded upon knowledge. It begins in the reception of truth into the understanding: if therefore the whole truth is not received, some part

of the moral means appointed for our spiritual improvement is not applied; and if any thing contrary to the truth is received, a cause is in operation upon our minds, opposite to the right one. The order of piety is the order of nature; first, we receive an opinion, then our feelings are excited by the opinion, and then the will acts under the influence of the feelings: as is the opinion, such are the resolutions and the actions. If the opinion therefore be wrong, all that follows must be wrong as to its moral character in the sight of God.

I am aware that a difficulty presents itself here to many young persons, which perplexes them not a little. They see individuals who have embraced the widest extremes of opinion, equally exemplary for the discharge of all the relative and social obligations. They see those who have embraced error, as useful, peaceful, and ornamental members of society, as those who have received the truth. This is undoubtedly a fact. I know very many who have rejected almost all that is peculiar to Christianity, who are yet amongst the most truly respectable inhabitants of the places in which they live. But this does not disprove my statements, nor in any degree prove that error is innocent and harmless. There are two lights in which the human character is to be viewed; its aspect towards men, and that which it bears towards God. Now I do not mean to say that religious error must, in any material or visible degree, alter the former. A man may be a good subject, neighbour, husband, father, tradesman, master, with any or with no religious opinions at all. Some infidels have been exemplary in their attention to all the duties of social life. This, however, only proves that error does not always disfigure the character in the sight

of man; but we are now more particularly speaking of its aspect towards God. In this view of it there may be a degree of obliquity truly awful, while all is correct towards man. Pride of intellect and of heart; self-sufficiency and self-dependence; a stout and pertinacious resistance of Jehovah's authority; a peremptory refusal to submit to his schemes and will, may all be rife in the soul, where every thing is fair in the exterior. God looks at the heart; and in his eye the character is decided by the state of the mind. Religion, properly speaking, has to do with God and heaven; it is a right disposition towards God, and a spiritual preparation for a celestial state, which it is perfectly evident may be wanting, where there are many social virtues. What I affirm then is, that error, according to the degree in which it exists, must vitiate the character, and deprave the heart in the sight of God: must obstruct the growth and exercise of the religious principle, must unfit a person for divine fellowship here, and for eternal glory hereafter.

Error on religious subjects is not a mere intellectual defect; it is not the result of mere weakness of understanding; its seat is in the heart: it springs from carelessness, prejudice, pride, or some other hidden and unsuspected operation of our depravity, which exerts a bewildering influence on the judgment. We are as certainly accountable to God for it as for evil conduct. It is not to be conceived for a moment, that we are responsible for the exercises of every other faculty of the soul, yet not for the understanding, which is the noblest of them all. If a man may believe error and yet be innocent, he may preach it without guilt; and if this be the case, may employ all his faculties, his

talents, his time, his influence, in direct opposition to the counsels of heaven, and to all the revelation of God, and yet be without blame.

If this statement be correct, error is certainly criminal. How can there be a doubt of it? If a man may disbelieve a less important truth and yet be innocent in that act of his disbelief; then he may reject a more important one, and be equally faultless. If he may discredit one truth without guilt, then he may discredit two; if two, ten; if ten, half the Bible; if half the Bible, the whole of it; so that he may innocently be a deist or atheist. Then why is it said to all the world, "He that believeth not shall be damned?" And what says the Scripture in other places? "For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth." "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so I say now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." "Henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." "For the time will come

when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon them swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." These and many more similar texts decide the point, that errors are blameable and destructive; that they spring from the depravity of our nature, and in so far as they prevail, exhibit a heart not yet brought into subjection to Christ.

Beware then, my dear children, of that spurious candour which looks with an equal eye on all opinions; which talks of the innocence of error, and thus diffuses a baneful indifference to the truth. The adage of Pope, who was a free-thinking Roman Catholic, has been circulated round society by innumerable echoes:

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

This, you will perceive, is an equivocal expression. In one view of it nothing can be more correct; for in every case, a right life, that is, right in the scriptural sense of the term, must proceed from a right creed: if, therefore, the life be right, so must also the creed. But the design of the author was to teach that a right life may stand connected with any creed, or with no creed; and that, therefore, religious opinions are of no

consequence whatever. This you will perceive is the popular yet dreadful dogma of infidelity. This bantling of scepticism has been foisted into the Christian world, and profanely baptized by the name of charity. But though it may wear a smiling appearance, it has an infidel heart. If this counterfeit, hollow thing, which dares to take to itself the sacred name of charity, had not renounced the Bible, it would certainly have known that errors in faith are the offspring of a heart wholly or partially unrenewed, and as decisive a proof of a want of religion, to the extent to which they prevail, as an unsanctified life.

Contend earnestly then for the faith once delivered to the saints. I would not have you bigots. This however is a vague and plastic term, which in the slang of modern infidelity has been applied generally to every one who attaches importance to religious opinions. If by bigotry is meant an overweening attachment to sentiments confessedly of lesser importance than many others; or a blind zeal for opinions adopted rather from custom than from conviction; or a spirit of intolerance, contempt, and persecution towards those who differ from us in the articles of their belief; if this be bigotry, be you no bigots; abhor and avoid a disposition of this kind. Adopt all your sentiments after a close examination, and upon a full conviction of their truth. Apportion your zeal for their diffusion according to their relative importance. Exercise the greatest forbearance and candour towards those who differ from you; but at the same time contend for the articles of your faith as matters of infinite consequence. Defend your opinions with an enlightened, dispassionate, but at the same time ardent, zeal. Insist upon the con-

nexion of right sentiments with right feelings; that the former, when really held, lead to the latter, and that the latter can never exist without the former. If this is what is meant by bigotry, then may you possess it more and more. Shrink not from the charge, if this be its meaning in the lips of those who use it. If you partake of true faith and genuine holiness, you must expect that the one will be called enthusiasm, and the other bigotry. Disregard both the accusations, and be not deterred by opprobrious names from the pursuit of eternal life.

Do you ask me what are right sentiments? I reply, Search the Scriptures for yourselves with docility, with prayer, with earnestness. No language can express the infinite importance of entering, without delay, on a deep and solemn examination into these matters. Call no man master, but consult the oracle of heaven. One evil, never enough to be deplored, is, that many people do not exercise any discrimination. They are pleased with different preachers, who bring as different gospels as the Koran is different from the Bible. They are as ready to put themselves in the way of hearing error as truth, and swallow down whatever they hear, provided only it is pleasingly delivered. Elegant language, good elocution, theatrical attitudes, fascinating imagery, are to them of far more importance than the truth. They are like children rushing into the shop of an apothecary, tasting at random of every vial, and selecting the most imposing in appearance, without the power of distinguishing medicines from poisons. And even where there is some general attachment to right sentiments, in how few cases is this attended with an enlightened ability to defend and enforce them! Our young people do not

sufficiently store their minds with the proofs and arguments of the opinions they have adopted. They are satisfied with believing without proof. This is not the case with the advocates of error. They are instructed in the whole system of attack and defence. They are skilful in all the manœuvres of controversy; sophisms, assertions, interrogatories, arguments, are all at their command. The friends of truth are, in these respects, often behind them. Reposing an unlimited confidence in the invulnerable security, and the impregnable strength, of their cause, they do not exercise themselves in the use of their arms, and appear sometimes to a disadvantage in skirmishing with their opponents. Be it your aim to be able to defend your principles. The truth is of infinite value; may you clearly and comprehensively understand it; cordially and practically believe it; sincerely and ardently love it; and be able both to state it with precision, and to support it with argument.

I cannot conclude this chapter without recommending to you the perusal of an excellent sermon by Dr. Pye Smith, "On the best Means of obtaining Satisfaction with regard to the Truth of Religious Sentiments."

After a suitable introduction, he points out, as the common and principal sources of error with regard to divine things, the weakness of our faculties; our taking up wrong subjects of investigation; and our being affected by the secret influence of sinful dispositions and habits. Under the last particular we find the following impressive observations:

"'A sinner,' says the wise king of Israel, 'seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not.' The entire want or the great deficiency, of love, of reverence, and devotedness to God, cannot but give a fatal obliquity to our professed researches after truth. Such a state of mind is also invariably connected with wrong affections in relation to ourselves.

Instead of an humble, adoring, and delightful admiration of the universal perfection of the Most High, there will be pride, self-confidence, and a determination to think at all events favourably of our own dispositions and practices. The judgment of God will be little regarded, and its impressions felt very slightly. His supremacy will be the object of secret murmur, or of virtual denial. The heart will rise in dislike against his glorious and unchangeable rectitude, and the necessary obligation of his rational creatures to love him with a perfect heart. His sole and sovereign competency to determine whether at all, to what extent, and in what way and manner, he may be pleased to pardon and bless sinners, will be met by a strong, though perhaps disguised repugnance. And the duty of a cheerful and implicit reliance on the unsullied purity, righteousness, and benevolence of Jehovah, notwithstanding the perplexity of present appearances, may indeed be faintly acknowledged in words, but as to practical effect, it will be treated with neglect, or even with disgust. These, and all other movements of the heart which is under the power of revolt from God, will most certainly darken the understanding, and mislead the judgment; 'evil will be put for good;' and good will be treated as evil."

The remedies of the erroneous tendencies of the human heart, are stated to be: "1. the maintenance of right affections towards the great Author and Revealer of religious truth: 2. a habit of entire subjection to the authority of the Holy Scriptures: 3. the use of all proper methods of acquiring and improving the art of just reasoning: 4. establishment in the evidence and influence of primary truths: 5. living under the benign and purifying influence of divine truth: 6. cautious observation of the effect of particular sentiments upon ourselves or others: 7. keeping in mind, that what has been adopted on impartial inquiry and sufficient evidence, is not to be lightly given up on the mere occurrence of some new objection: 8. fervent prayer. "The constant, serious, and affectionate practice of this great and necessary duty, will have the most happy effect in obtaining and preserving the rational and scriptural satisfaction of the truth of our sentiments, if they be indeed true; and, if otherwise, of leading us to the timely and beneficial discovery of our error. Prayer elevates the soul above the mists and darkness of this revolted world, and places us under the very shining of the Everlasting Light. It tends to exterminate the greatest obstruction to the entrance of that light, the prepossession of sin in the heart. It gives vigour and delicacy to the sanctified perceptions. It guides that holy, mental sense, which is the characteristic of the real Christian, to the quick discrimination,

and the delighted reception of truth and goodness. Through prayer, the hallowed medium of intercourse with heaven, the devout mind ascends to its closest enjoyment of communion with the Lord God of truth: and from him descend the returns of prayer, 'every good gift, and every perfect gift.' "

PRAYER.

O God, thou art love; thou art light. Holy love is thy nature; and thou art the God of truth; all truth centres in thee, and emanates from thee. May I know thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I render thee my sincere and hearty thanks for the sacred Scriptures, that inestimable volume, which is given by thine inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. May I consider thy word the only infallible standard of truth; and turning from all human authority, however I may avail myself of the teaching of uninspired men, may I determine to receive nothing as truth which is not taught here, and everything as truth which is taught here. Give me an enlightened understanding, and lead me into the knowledge of thy will. And as many false teachers are gone out, and many false systems are abroad, O God, help me to discriminate between truth and error. May I have ability to detect the sophistries by which many are spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit. Let me not be confounded by difficulties which I cannot remove, nor staggered by mysteries which I cannot comprehend. What is contained in thy word may I receive in all docility and humility, however it may transcend my understanding. Preserve me from all pride of intellect, and all vain speculation. Let me feel the power of truth in sanctifying my heart and comforting my mind, and thus find in the holiness and peace produced by the truth, the best guardians against false doctrine. May my heart be established with grace, that I may not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. Pity my ignorance, help my weakness, and strengthen my faith. These things I implore through Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

All other questions, compared with this, are trifles light as air, or but as the dust of the balance; philosophy, literature, commerce, the arts and the sciences, have, it is true, a relative importance; they soften the manners, alleviate the evils, multiply the comforts of life; yet it is impossible to forget that they are the mere embellishments of a scene, which we "must shortly quit; the decorations of a theatre, from which the actors and spectators must soon retire together." But religion is of infinite and eternal moment, and developes its consequence most perfectly in the moment when the importance of all other subjects terminates for ever. A mistake in this affair, persisted in till death, is followed by effects infinitely dreadful, and of eternal duration. You should bring to this inquiry, therefore, my children, a trembling solicitude to be led in the right way.

Some consider religion as a mere notional assent to certain theological opinions; others, as a bare attendance on religious ordinances; others, as the performance of moral duties. They are all equally wrong; for instead of being any one of these separately and apart from the rest, it is the union of them all. Religion admits of many definitions in scripture language. It is "repent-

ance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:" or it is "faith working by love:" or it is receiving "that grace which bringeth salvation, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world:" or it is "denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following after Christ:" or it is "being born again of the Spirit, and sanctified by the truth:" or it is the supreme love of Christ, or the habitual fear of God. Each one of these phrases is a definition of true piety; but I shall now adopt another, and represent it as "a right disposition of mind towards God, implanted in our nature by the influence of the Holy Ghost, and exercising itself according to the circumstances in which we are placed."

Religion is the same in substance in all rational creatures, whether innocent or fallen. In angels it is still a right disposition towards God, exercising itself in the way of adoration, love, gratitude, and obedience, but not of faith, hope, and repentance, because their circumstances preclude the possibility of these acts. Religion, in reference to fallen man, is a right disposition of mind; but inasmuch as he is a sinful and ruined creature, yet a creature capable of salvation, through the mediation of Christ, it must necessarily include in it, in addition to the feelings of angelic piety, all those mental exercises and habits which are suitable to a state of guilt, and a dispensation of mercy. Let us take each part of the definition by itself.

I. God is the primary object of religion. It is not enough that we perform our duties towards our fellow-creatures; but to be truly pious we must perform our duty towards God. We may be exemplary and even punctilious in discharging every social obligation:

we may be moral in the usual acceptation of the term, honourable, amiable; and yet may be all this, without one single spark of true piety; because in all this there may be no reference whatever to God. An atheist may be all this. Until the mind is rightly affected towards God, there is no religion, because He is the direct and primary object of it. It is something perfectly independent, as to its essence, of all the social relations. If a man were wrecked, like Alexander Selkirk, on an uninhabited island, where there would be no room, of course, for loyalty, honesty, kindness, mercy, justice, truth, or any of the relative virtues, the claims of piety would still follow him to this dreary and desolate abode; and even there, where he should never hear the sweet music of speech, nor look on the human face divine, he would still be under the obligations of piety; even there a voice would be heard breaking the silence around him, with the solemn injunction of Scripture, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Bear in recollection, then, my dear children, that God, as he is revealed in his word, is the direct and primary object of all true piety; and that the most exemplary discharge of the social duties can be no substitute for that reverence, and love, and gratitude, and obedience, which we owe to him.

Most strange it is, and yet most lamentably common, for men to make the discharge of their duties towards each other, a substitute for those which they owe to God, and an excuse for neglecting them; as if the Divine Being were the only one in the universe, who can, with propriety, be forgotten; and as if He might be utterly neglected, without any criminality on our part. He is our Creator, Preserver, and Bene-

factor; in Him we live, and move, and have our being. His nature includes every thing that can entitle him to our esteem and adoration; His goodness, every thing that can claim our gratitude and love. How then can it be thought that the practical remembrance of our duty to man can be any reason for not loving and serving Him? Our first and most important relation is that of creatures dependent on our Creator; and, therefore, our first and most indispensable duty is a right disposition towards God. Hence, the Scriptures resolve all crime into forgetfulness of God. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." To be a wicked man, and to forget God, are one and the same thing. To be destitute of right affections towards God, is the very essence of sin; and to possess these affections the essence of religion.

II. Religion is a devotion of all a man's powers to God. It is not merely a thing of outward forms and ceremonies, but of the heart. It is more than external acts, it is a disposition; not a compulsory habit of life, but a voluntary one. That religion must be an internal principle, an affair of the soul, is evident from the nature of its object, of whom it is said, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." As the heart lies all open to him, unless there be religion there, he scorns the uplifted hand and bended knee. It is evident from reason, that piety must have its seat in the breast; for what spiritual excellence can there be in an action, which is either performed from a bad motive, or from none at all? It is evident from revelation. Read such injunctions as these. "My son, give me thine heart." "Get thee a new heart." "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God." "Be renewed in the spirit of your

mind." "Ye must be born again." Equally in point are all those passages which command us to love God, to fear him, to trust in him, to glorify him; duties which of course imply the exercise and the vigorous exercise of the affections of the mind. Notions however clear, morality however exemplary, are not enough till the current of feeling is turned towards God. A mere cold correctness of deportment, which leaves the heart in a state of alienation and estrangement from God, is not the piety of the word of truth.

Now, in consequence of our natural descent from Adam since his fall, we come into the world totally destitute of a right disposition towards God, and grow up under the influence of a contrary temper. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This is what I mean by the total depravity of human nature; not that there is an absence of all amiable and praiseworthy feeling towards our fellow-creatures; not that there is the predominance of criminal and vicious appetite; but that there is a total destitution of all right feeling towards God. Very loose and incorrect representations have been made, by injudicious writers, to the public, on the subject of human depravity. It would seem, from their statements, as if mankind were all alike, as bad as vice could make them. Now, by the total depravity of the whole race of man, I simply mean, that since the fall, every man comes into the world totally destitute of holiness, or in other words, of the love of God, and in consequence of this destitution will and does live without God, till renewed by divine grace. Some will go further astray in sin than others, according to the circumstances in which they are placed; but so far as the state of the heart is concerned, all are equally desti-

tute of the principles of holiness, as long as they are unrenewed by the Divine Spirit. Before true religion can be possessed by a human being, there must of consequence be an entire change of his mind, a complete alteration in his disposition. The Scriptures inform us that all are inherently depraved, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and, accordingly, with equal explicitness they inform us, that all must be changed before they can partake of true piety. This change is so great that our Lord himself calls it a second birth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Until this change takes place there cannot be even the commencement of true religion; for without it whatever bears the semblance of piety is done apart from a right disposition of mind: and we cannot suppose that God, who sees the heart, is pleased with such service, any more than we should be with compliments from a person, whose bosom we knew to be destitute of all right feeling towards us. The mistake which many make in religion is, they do not begin with the beginning; they attempt to carry up the superstructure without seeking to have the foundation laid in the renewal of the nature. They profess to serve God outwardly, before they have surrendered their heart to his renewing grace. Their religion is a new dress, but not a new nature. It wants that which alone constitutes piety, a "right disposition towards God."

III. This disposition is implanted in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. The operations of Deity, in the formation of the material world, are frequently alluded to by the sacred writers, as illustrating the work of Jehovah in renewing the human mind, and bringing

forth beauties of holiness in the human character. The soul of man, as to all spiritual excellence, is in its natural state a chaos; and the same Divine Spirit which brooded on the materials of the formless void; which moved on the face of the deep, and brought order out of confusion, and beauty out of deformity; which said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" now operates on the dark mind, the irregular affections, the hard heart of the sinner, giving true light to the understanding, a right disposition to the soul, submission to the will, and, in short, creating the whole man anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. This is declared in many passages of the Scriptures. "A new heart also will I give you," said God to the Jews, "and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." To the same effect are our Lord's words to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he shall not see the kingdom of heaven." This same truth is often repeated by the apostles. "You hath he quickened," "Who hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "It is God who worketh in us to will and to do." That it must be some power out of a man, and beyond himself, to effect the change, is evident from the circumstance that it is not merely the conduct, but the disposition itself, which requires to be changed; and who can reach the mind, and regulate the springs of action, but God? Not that we are to lie down in indolent neglect, and say, "If then it is the Holy Ghost who must change the mind, I may give up

all concern about the matter, and wait before I attempt to perform the duties of religion, till I feel that I am changed." No: as rational creatures we must use our faculties, consider our case, examine our hearts, tremble at our situation, call upon God in prayer, and give him no rest till he pour out his Spirit upon us. The very circumstance that we are thus dependent on God, should make us more tremblingly anxious, more importunate in prayer, for divine help. If you were entirely dependent upon the assistance of a fellow-creature for help to recover your property, liberty, or life, would not that very conviction impel you to the door and presence of the person, in all the eloquence and urgency of importunate entreaty? Would you not pour out your very soul in the language of wrestling supplication? Would you not press your suit by every argument, so long as a ray of hope fell upon your spirits? In that case, the idea that help must come from another, would not render you indolent, and why should it do so in the business of conversion?

The only circumstance which renders the influence of the Holy Spirit necessary for the conversion of the soul, is the want of inclination, or disposition to love and serve God. This is what we call moral inability, in distinction from natural inability. A man is morally unable when he has no inclination; he is naturally unable when he has no opportunity. When a master commands a servant to go and fetch him something, and the servant hears the command and at the same time has the use of limbs, but refuses to obey, he is morally unable, that is, he has no inclination, no disposition; but if deprived of the use of his limbs he is naturally unable: in the former case he could go if

he would; in the latter he would if he could: the former is guilty of rebellion, for all he wanted was disposition; the latter is innocent, for he has no opportunity. One wants will, the other wants power. This illustrates the case of a sinner, he is morally unable to obey and love God; he has enough natural power, he has reason, will, affections, and he has eyes to read God's commands, and ears to hear them. Why, then, does he not obey them? Because he has no disposition. If he were a lunatic or an idiot from his birth, his inability to serve God would be a natural inability. Now moral inability or want of disposition, so far from being an excuse for neglecting God and religion, is the very essence of sin. The less disposition a man has to that which is good, and the more disposition he has to that which is evil, the more wicked he is; just as a person addicted to dishonesty, cruelty, or injustice, is the more guilty, the stronger his propensities are to his wickedness. The more natural inability we have, the more we are excused from not doing what is right; but the greater our moral inability is, the more guilty we are; and this moral inability is what our Lord speaks of, when he says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." He cannot, because he will not, and he will not, because he has no disposition. Hence he says in another place, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." The inability which the Spirit of God removes then in conversion, is the want of inclination; the ability which he gives is a right disposition. In conversion no violence is done to the will, because the will always follows the disposition. If this be correct, we are to take pains with ourselves, to think, to resolve, to act, though in dependence upon the grace of God.

IV. I shall now state how a right disposition of mind towards God will exercise itself in our circumstances as sinners, and this will bring us more immediately to a consideration of the nature of real religion.

1. Reverence, veneration, and awe, are due from us to that great and glorious Being who is the author of our existence, the fountain of our comforts, the witness of our actions, and the arbiter of our eternal destiny. How sublimely grand and awful is the character of God, as it is revealed in his word! Acknowledging as you do, my children, his existence, you should make him the object of your habitual fear and dread. You should maintain a constant veneration for him, a trembling deprecation of his wrath. A consciousness of his existence, and of his immediate presence, should never, for any length of time, be absent from your mind. The idea of an ever-present, omniscient, omnipotent Spirit, should not only be sometimes before your understanding as an article of faith, but impressed upon your heart as an awful and practical reality. Your spirits should ever be labouring to apprehend, and to apply the representation which the Scriptures give us of the Deity. A desire to know him, to feel and act towards him with propriety, should be interwoven with the entire habit of your reflections and conduct.

2. Penitence is indispensably necessary. In order to this, there must be deep conviction of sin; for none can mourn over a fault, of which he is not convinced. A deep consciousness of guilt is one of the first feelings of a renewed mind, and one of the first operations of the Holy Spirit, "when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin." We come to a knowledge of our sinful state, by an acquaintance with the spirituality, purity, and

extent of the moral law; "for sin is the transgression of the law." Until we know the law, which is the rule of duty, we cannot know in what way, and to what extent, we have offended against it. The exposition which our Lord has given us of the law, in his sermon on the mount, informs us, that it is not only the overt act of iniquity which makes a man a sinner; but the inward feeling, the imagination, the desire. An unchaste look is a breach of the seventh commandment: a feeling of immoderate anger is a violation of the sixth. Viewing ourselves in such a mirror, and trying ourselves by such a standard, we must all confess ourselves to be guilty of ten thousand sins. And then again we are not only sinful for what we do that is wrong; but for what we leave undone which is right and ought to be done. If, therefore, we have a right disposition towards God, we shall have a deep feeling of depravity and guilt; an impressive sense of moral obliquity; an humbling consciousness of vileness. To the charges of the law, we must cry guilty, guilty! We shall not only admit upon the testimony of others that we are sinful, but from a perception of the holiness of God's nature, and the purity of his law, we shall discern the number, aggravations, and enormity of our offences. We shall do homage to infinite holiness, by acknowledging ourselves altogether sinful.

Sorrow is essential to penitence. We cannot have been made partakers of penitence if we do not feel inward grief on the review of our transgressions. We read of "godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation." If we have injured a fellow-creature, the first indication of a right sense of the aggression is a sincere regret that we should have acted so. How

much more necessary is it that we should be unfeignedly sorry for our innumerable offences against God. Sorrow for sin is not, however, to be estimated only by violent emotions and copious tears. The passions are much stronger in themselves, and much more excitable, in some than in others; and, therefore, the same degree of inward emotion, or of outward grief, is not to be expected from all. The degrees of sorrow, as well as the outward modes of expressing it, will vary, as belonging more to the sensitive nature than to the rational; and for avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness on this head, it may be laid down for certain, that the least degree of sorrow is sufficient, if it produce reformation; the greatest insufficient, if it do not.

The next step in penitence is confession. Real sorrow for sin is always frank and impartial, while false or partial sorrow is prone to concealment, palliation, and apology. There is a wretched proneness in many persons when convinced of sin, to offer excuses and to endeavour to think the best of their case. They cannot be brought to admit the charge in all its length and breadth, but they attempt to hide its magnitude from their own eyes. This is a dangerous disposition, and has often come between a man's soul and his salvation. All the great and precious promises of pardon are suspended upon the condition of confession. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Confession must be in detail, not in generals only; it must be free and impartial.

Abhorrence of sin is also included in penitence. There can be no real grief for an action, which is not accompanied by dislike of it. We shall unquestionably

hate sin, if we partake of godly sorrow. This, indeed, is the true meaning of the term repentance, which does not signify grief merely, but an entire change of mind towards sin. Abhorrence of sin is as necessary a part of repentance, as grief. Our hatred of transgression must be grounded, not merely on viewing it as an injury to ourselves, but as an insult to God. For penitence, on account of sin, is altogether a different feeling to that which we experience when a fire, a shipwreck, or a disease has diminished our comforts. Our tears, then, are not enough, if not followed by abhorrence. "If we are sincere in our grief, we shall detest and fly the viper which has stung us, and not cherish and caress it whilst with false tears we bathe the wound we have received."

3. Faith in Jesus Christ is no less necessary. Faith is a most important, and most essential part of true religion. Faith in Christ is a firm practical belief of the gospel testimony concerning Christ, a full persuasion of the truth of what is declared, and a confident expectation of what is promised. The testimony is this: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hence then faith is a belief that Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice of atonement to divine justice for human guilt, accompanied by an exclusive dependence on that atonement for acceptance with God, and a confident expectation of pardon and eternal life according to the promises of the gospel. Mere assent does not amount to

the scriptural idea of faith. There must be dependence and expectation. The subject of the divine testimony is not like a problem in mathematics, which appeals exclusively to the understanding; in this case mere assent, or a perception of the truth of the proposition, is all that belief contains: but the gospel is a report which interests our hearts, and which is, in fact, proposed to us not only as a promise to be believed, but a rule to be obeyed. You see from all this, that faith is not only the belief of a book, but trust in a person. It is such a belief of the testimony in the gospel concerning Christ, as leads to a willing, confident, and joyful reliance upon him as our atoning sacrifice for salvation. Faith, then, certainly includes in it an exercise of the will, or else there can be nothing moral in its nature. We cannot affirm of any thing merely intellectual, that it is matter of duty. Exclude an exercise of volition or disposition from faith, and then, it is no longer obligatory upon the conscience. Besides, if belief be merely an intellectual exercise, so is unbelief; for they are opposites.

Faith is, most obviously, as much a part of a right disposition towards God, as penitence. God having given Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners, and promised to save those who depend upon His atonement, and commanded all to ask for pardon and eternal life; it is manifest, that not to believe, is to dispute the divine veracity, as well as to rebel against the divine authority. To believe the gospel, and to expect salvation through Christ, is to honour all the attributes of Deity at once, is to praise the mercy which prompted the scheme of redemption, the wisdom which devised it, the power which accomplished it, that justice which is satisfied by

it, and the truth which engages to bestow its benefits on all that seek them. Not to believe is an act of contempt which insults Jehovah in every view of his character at once. Until we are brought, therefore, actually to depend on Christ so as to expect salvation, we have no real religion.

4. A willingness in all things to obey God, completes the view which ought to be given of a right disposition towards him. There must be a distinct acknowledgment of His right to govern us, and an unreserved surrender of our heart and life to his authority: an habitual desire to do what He has enjoined, to avoid what He has forbidden. Where there is this desire to please, this reluctance to offend God, the individual will read with constancy and attention the sacred volume, which is written for the express purpose of teaching us how to obey and please the Lord. Finding there innumerable injunctions against all kinds of immorality and sin, and as many commands to practise every personal, relative, and social duty, the true Christian will be zealous for all good works. Remembering that Jesus Christ is proposed there as our example no less than our Redeemer, he will strive to be like him in purity, spirituality, submission to the will of God, and devotedness to the divine glory. Nor will he forget to imitate the beautiful meekness, lowliness, and kindness of his deportment: so that the love which a right view of his atonement never fails to produce, transforms the soul of the believer into his image. Finding in the word of God many commands to cultivate the spirit and attend on the exercises of devotion, the true Christian will remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy, will maintain daily

prayer in his closet, and unite himself in the fellowship of some Christian church, to live in communion with believers, and with them to celebrate the sacred supper. During the trials of life, he will console himself with the promises of grace and the prospects of glory. He will soften his earthly cares by the influence of his heavenly hopes. He will endeavour to keep himself pure from the vices of the world, and shine as a spiritual light amidst surrounding darkness. His great business in this world will be to prepare for a better: and when the time arrives for him to quit the visible for the invisible state, he will bow in meek submission to the will of God, and retire from earth, cheered with the prospect and the expectation of eternal glory.

Such appears to me to be the nature of true religion. Its possessor, daily conscious of his defects, will habitually humble himself before God; and while he seeks forgiveness for past offences, through the blood of Jesus Christ, will as earnestly implore the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit to sanctify him more perfectly for the future.

PRAYER.

Almighty and Eternal God, who hast so loved the world as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and willest not the death of a sinner, but wouldst rather he should repent and live; in thy great mercy take me under the teaching of thy Holy Spirit, that I may understand the nature of pure and undefiled religion; feel its influence in my heart; observe its precepts in my life; and be guided and preserved by it to everlasting glory. And seeing it consists in a right state of mind and heart towards thee, its divine object, do thou implant it in my soul. I know by thy holy Word, and feel in myself

that the carnal mind is enmity towards God; that I am dead in trespasses and sin; and that in my flesh there dwells no good thing. Renew me in the Spirit of my mind. Take away the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh. Convince me of sin. Give me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Assist me to believe in Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Help me to love thee with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and my neighbour as myself. May I be justified by faith, and have peace with thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ. O save me from self-deception in this most momentous concern. Let me not be of those who, when they shall cry Lord! Lord! in the day of judgment, shall hear him say, Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity. Save, oh, save me from so fatal a delusion, which, if persisted in till death, is a mistake which will require an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore. Hear me, for Christ's sake, to whom, to the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed eternal glory. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESPONSIBILITY INCURRED BY A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

The advantage of any system of means, must of course as to their value, be estimated by the importance of the end to be obtained by them, which, in the case of a pious education, is the possession of real religion in this world, and eternal happiness in that which is to come. It includes not only a profession of piety in our present state of being, but all that infinite and everlasting felicity, which piety brings in its train. Of what vast consequence, then, must be the most suitable means for attaining this sublime purpose!

The value of a thing, my dear children, is sometimes learnt by the want of it: consider, therefore, the situation of those young persons, whose parents, careless of their own souls, take no pains for the salvation of their children. In what a helpless situation are such young people placed! They are taught perhaps every thing but religion. They are instructed in all the elegant accomplishments of fashionable life; but how to serve God and obtain eternal salvation is no part of their education. In their abode, wisdom, in the form of

parental piety, is never heard saying, "Hearken, ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." They see cards and other amusements often introduced to the domestic circle, but not the Bible; they hear singing, but it is not the songs of Zion; there are feasting and conviviality, but no devotion; there is no domestic altar, no family prayer. The sabbath is marked with the same levity as other days. They go to church, perhaps, but hear any thing rather than the pure gospel of Christ. They are taken to every gay party in the neighbourhood, and are studiously trained up for pleasure. They scarcely ever see the lovely form of religion in the circles which they frequent, except when, like its divine Author, it is brought there to be despised and rejected of men. How are such young people to be pitied! Who can wonder that they do not fear the Lord?

How different has been your lot! the very opposite of this. From your earliest childhood you have been taught the nature and the necessity of true religion. Instruction on this subject has been with you coeval with the dawn of reason. Every topic of piety has been explained to you as you could understand it. The doctrines of Christianity have been stated and proved; its duties unfolded and enforced. The nature and attributes of God, the extent and obligation of his law, the design and grace of the gospel, have been inculcated; your sinful state has been clearly set before you; the object of Christ's death pointed out; the necessity of regeneration, justification, and sanctification impressed upon your heart. If you perish, will it be for lack of knowledge? If you miss the path of life, will it be from not having it pointed out?

To instruction has been united admonition. With

all the tenderness of parental affection, and all the seriousness which the nature of the subject demanded, you have been warned, entreated, and even besought to fear God and seek the salvation of your souls. You have seen the tear glistening in a father's eye, while his tongue addressed to you the fondest wishes of his heart for your eternal happiness.

You have enjoyed the advantages of a system of mild and appropriate discipline. Remember you not the time when your budding corruptions were nipped by the kind hand of parental care; and the blossoms of youthful excellence were sheltered and fostered by a mother's watchful solicitude? Have they not often reproved you for what was wrong, and commended you for what was right? Have they not, by praise and by dispraise, judiciously administered, endeavoured to train you up to hate that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good? Have they not kept you from improper company, and warned you against associates that were likely to injure you? Have they not, with weeping eyes, and bleeding hearts, administered that correction which your faults deserved?

You have also seen all this enforced by the power of a holy example, imperfect it is true, yet sufficient, like the sun, even when partially covered by a mist, to be your guide. You cannot doubt that religion was the governing principle of their hearts. The happiness as well as holiness of true piety has appeared in their conduct. You have seen the cloud of sorrow which affliction brought upon their brow, irradiated with the sunbeams of christian faith and hope. Thus the whole weight of parental example has been employed to give impression in favour of religion on your heart.

But the advantage of a pious education stops not here; for you well know that it has procured for you all other religious benefits, which conduce, in the order of means, to the salvation of the soul. You have been taken, from childhood, to hear the gospel preached by those who were anxious to save themselves, and those that heard them. You have been associated with religious people, and joined the circles of the righteous, where the claims of religion are respected, and her holy image has been welcomed with affection, and treated with respect. Religious books have been put into your hands. Schools have been selected for your education which would aid the work of your parents, and every thing has been kept out of your way which would be likely to be an impediment to the formation of your religious character, and your pursuit of eternal salvation. Thus, so far as means go, the avenues of perdition have been blocked up, the way to destruction has been filled with mounds and barriers; while the path of life has been carefully laid open to your view, and every thing done to facilitate your entrance to the road to immortality. You have been born, cradled, and instructed in an element of religion; you have trod the ground, and breathed the atmosphere of piety. What advantages! Who shall count their number, or calculate their value!

And now think of the responsibility which all these privileges entail upon you. This thought fills me with trembling for you, if you do not tremble for yourselves. Man is an accountable being, and his accountability to God is in exact proportion to his opportunities of knowing and doing the will of his Creator. No talents

of this kind are intrusted to man, so precious as those of a religious education: and with no persons will God be so awfully strict in judgment, as with those who have possessed them. A law of proportion will be the rule of the final judgment. Ten talents will not be required from those to whom only five were delivered; nor will only five be demanded from those with whom ten were intrusted. This is plainly stated by Christ in that most impressive passage, "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Who, upon this scale, shall measure the height and depth of your responsibility? The poor Pagan who hews down a tree, makes a god of its wood, and worships the deity which he has thus fashioned, who lives in all kind of lust, and cruelty, and falsehood; the Mahometan who turns his face to the rising sun, and calls upon his prophet; the Rustic who revels in the village where his father rioted before him, and where neither of them ever heard one parental admonition, nor one gospel sermon; nay, even the Infidel who derides the scripture, and was taught to do it by his sire, will not have so much to account for in the day of scrutiny, as you who have enjoyed the advantages of a pious education. Think, I beseech you, upon all your privileges; the instructions, the warnings, the admonitions, the reproofs, you have received even from your infancy; your father's earnest prayers, and your

mother's monitory tears; domestic teaching and ministerial advice; sabbaths spent, and sermons heard; all, all must be accounted for at the last day; all will be recounted in judgment. You may, now, think lightly of these things, but God does not. You may forget them as they pass, but God does not. They are dealt out to you as precious things: the number of them is written down amongst the records of omniscience, and in that day when the throne shall be set and the books shall be opened, the improvement of each will be demanded from you, by a voice at which the universe shall tremble. You will not be tried as one that had only the feeble glimmering of natural reason to guide his perceptions and his conduct; but as one that walked amidst the noontide splendour of divine revelation, as one that occupied just that station in the moral world, where the light of heaven fell with the clearest and the steadiest brightness.

Do fancy yourself called into judgment to answer for your religious privileges; summoned by a voice which it is impossible to resist, from the throng of trembling spirits waiting for their doom; fancy you hear the voice that commanded the universe into being, saying to you, "Child of the righteous, son of many prayers and much anxiety, give an account of thyself; exhibit the fruits and improvement of all thy rich and innumerable advantages for a life of piety. Ye parents who taught him, bear witness. I entrusted him to your care. Did ye bring him up in the fear, and nurture, and admonition of the Lord? Resign your trust; deliver your testimony; clear yourselves." Impressive and awful spectacle! There you stand before the tri-

bunal of God, confronted by the mother that bore you, and the father that loved you. If you shall then be found to have neglected your advantages, and lived without piety, what a testimony will they bear. "Thou art our witness, O God, and that unhappy being, (in whom we once delighted as our child, but whom we now renounce for ever,) with what affectionate solicitude, and unwearied perseverance, with how many tears and prayers, we laboured for his salvation. But all was useless. This is not the season of mercy, or we would still pour over his guilty head one more fervent prayer for his salvation; but forbidden to commend him to thy mercy, we can now do nothing but leave him to thy justice." Miserable man, what can he say? He is speechless. Conscious guilt leaves him without excuse, and despair seals up his lips in silence. One piercing agonizing look is directed to his parents, one deep groan escapes his bosom, as the ghosts of murdered opportunities rise upon his vision, and crowd the regions of his fancy. As his distracted eye ranges over the millions who stand on the left hand of the Judge, there is not one whose situation he does not envy. The pagan, the mahometan, the poor peasant, who sinned away his life in a benighted village, even the infidel going up to receive his doom for blaspheming the God of revelation, appears less guilty, less miserable than he.

But were my pen dipped in the gall of celestial displeasure, I could not describe the weight of the sentence, that will fall upon the ungodly child of righteous parents, nor the misery which it includes. Who shall portray the hell of such a fallen spirit, or set forth the torments

with which it will be followed to the regions of eternal night? We all know that no sufferings are so dreadful as those which are self-procured; and that self-reproach infuses a bitterness into the cup of woe, which exasperates the anguish of despair. The disappointment of long and cherished hopes is dreadful; but if there be no reason for self-reproach, even that is tolerable: but to suffer through eternal ages, in the bottomless pit, with no prospect but of misery, no employment but that of numbering over the advantages we once possessed for escaping from the wrath to come, this is hell. My children, my children! my heart agonizes as I write. I groan over these lines of my book, these pictures of my fancy. Do take warning. Hearken to these sentiments. Let them have their due weight with your souls. Treasure up this conviction in your minds, that of all lands on the earth, it is the most dreadful to travel to the bottomless pit from a Christian country; and of all the situations in that country, it is the most awful to reach the bottomless pit from the house of godly parents. Let me be any thing in the day of judgment, and in eternal misery, rather than the irreligious child of religious parents.*

PRAYER.

O God, thou art a rock: thy way is perfect, just and right art thou. Thou art the universal Governor, as well as Father of thy creatures: all thy rational offspring are under thy moral dominion: and thy government is directed by a law of proportion. Where thou givest much, thou wilt require much; and where thou hast bestowed only

* There is a little repetition in this chapter of some of the sentiments in the first: but as the subject led to it the Author was not anxious to avoid it.

little, thou wilt require only little. Impress upon my heart a deep and most impressive sense of my large responsibility in being the child of pious parents, and enjoying the benefits of a religious education. O what advantages I have had: what means of grace have been offered me: what aids of salvation have been placed within my reach! what an awful responsibility rests upon me! O God, thou mightest well say of me, What more could I have done for him in the way of means than I have done? What will become of me, if after all this I should neglect salvation, and live and die without religion? What a hell will mine be, if my soul should be lost! Surely mine will be the lowest place in the bottomless pit. God have mercy upon me: Christ have mercy upon me; and let not all my religious advantages be a savour of death unto death. How shall I meet my parents in judgment, if I do not profit by their instructions? How shall I meet thee, O my loving Saviour, if after all this I should disobey thy commands, and misimprove thy mercies. I am afraid of myself: I tremble for myself. In thy rich grace bless to me my advantages, and let me have through eternity to thank thee in heaven for having improved a pious education; and not through eternity to curse my own folly in hell, for having neglected it. Hear this, my supplication, for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OBSTACLES TO ENTERING ON A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Our Lord has most explicitly taught us, my dear children, that the entrance to the path of life is not unattended with difficulty, and is not to be accomplished without effort. Into that road, we are not borne by the pressure of the thronging multitude, or the force of natural inclination. No broad and flowery avenue attracts the eye; no syren songs of worldly pleasure allure the ear: "but strait is the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it." Hence the admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This implies that there are obstructions to be removed, and difficulties to be surmounted. The fundamental and universal obstruction with which every one has to contend, and which can be removed only by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the darkness and depravity brought upon human nature by the fall, and the indulged sensuality, prejudice, and enmity of the fleshly mind. But this prevailing depravity manifests itself in various specific forms according to the different circumstances, constitutions, ages, and tempers of its subjects. It is an inward and universal evil,

exhibiting its opposition to religion in an immense variety of ways.

1. Self-conceit is not uncommonly to be met with in the character of the young, and is very much opposed to the spirit of true piety. This is a sort of disease of youth, finding a peculiar susceptibility in persons of your age to receive it. Young in years and experience, they are very apt, nevertheless, to form high notions of themselves, and to fancy that they are competent judges of all truth and conduct. They decide, where wiser minds deliberate; speak, where experience is silent; rush forward with impetuosity, where their sires scarcely creep; and think themselves quite as competent to determine and to act, as those who have witnessed the events of threescore years and ten. This disposition shows itself oftentimes in reference to business; and the bankrupt list has, a thousand times, revealed the consequences. But it is seen in more important matters than business. In the gaiety of their spirits, and in the efflorescence of youthful energy, they see no great need of religion to make them happy; or if some religion be necessary, they do not think it requires all that solicitude and caution with which older Christians attend to its concerns: they are not so much in danger as some would represent; they will not take up with the humbling, self-abasing, penitential religion of their fathers, but adopt a more rational piety; they have reason to guide them, strength to do all that is necessary, and therefore cannot see the need of so much fear, caution, and dependence.

My children, be humble; pride and self-conceit will otherwise be your ruin. Think of your age and inexperience. How often already have you been misled, by

the ardour of youth, in cases where you were most confident that you were right. When the Athenian orator was asked, what is the first grace in oratory? he replied, Delivery; the second? Delivery; the third? still he replied, Delivery: so, if I am asked what is the first grace in religion? I reply, Humility; the second? Humility; the third? still Humility; and self-conceit is the first, and the second, and the third obstruction?

2. The love of worldly pleasure is a great impediment to piety. It has been most profanely said, "Youth is the time for pleasure, manhood for business, old age for religion." It is painful to observe, that if the two latter allotments of human life are neglected, the first is not. Young people too often answer the description given by the apostles, "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." In youth, there are many temptations to the gratification of this propensity; the senses are vigorous, the spirits lively, the imagination ardent, the passions warm, and the anxieties of life but few and feeble. Hence many give themselves up to the impulses of their corrupt nature, and are held in alienation from a life of piety by a love of pleasure. Some are carried away by a vain and frivolous love of dress and show; others by a delight in conviviality and parties; others by routs, balls, and theatrical representations; others by the sports of the field; others by intemperance and debauchery. It is admitted that all these gratifications are not equally degrading in themselves, nor equally destructive of reputation and health; but if indulged as the chief good, they alike prevent the mind from attending to the concerns of religion. A predominant love of worldly pleasure, of any kind, is destructive in every point of view. It unfits you for

the pursuits, and disinclines you for the toils, of business, and thus is the enemy of your worldly interests; it often leads on from gratifications which, in the opinion of the world, are decent and moral, to those which are vicious and immoral; it is incompatible with the duties and comforts of domestic life; it hinders the improvement of the understanding, and keeps the mind barren and empty: it prevents you from becoming the benefactors of your species; but its greatest mischief is, that it totally indisposes the mind for religion, and thus extends its mischief to eternity: in short, if cherished and persisted in, it ruins and damns the soul for ever. My children, beware of this most dangerous propensity: consider whither it leads; check it to the uttermost; and ask grace from heaven to acquire a better taste. "What a hideous case is this, to be so debased in the temper of your minds, as to lose all the laudable appetites and advantages of an intellectual nature; and to be sunk into the deformity of a devil, and into the meanness of a brute! To be so drenched in malignant delights, and in sensual, fading, and surfeiting pleasures, as to forego all real and eternal satisfactions for them, and to entail insupportable and endless miseries upon yourselves by them!" Yes, if you live for worldly pleasure, and neglect religion, you are giving up an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, for light and frivolous gratifications, which are but for a moment. You are, for the sake of a few years' empty mirth, entailing everlasting ages of unmitigated torments. Besides, though worldly pleasure gratifies, it does not satisfy? When the honey is all sucked, does it leave no sting behind? And then, what are the pleasures of the world, compared with those of religion, but the

shadow to the substance; the stagnant pool to the fresh and running fountain; the smoking taper to the mid-day sun? Shall worldly pleasure cheat you of salvation?

3. With young Men, business is often a hindrance to piety. I wish all young persons to be industrious; you must earn your bread by the sweat of your brow. Idleness is disgraceful and dangerous, for, "Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do." I therefore exhort you earnestly to be diligent in whatever trade or profession you are engaged. Strive to excel as an honest, honourable, and industrious tradesman: but still remember our Lord's impressive words, "one thing is needful." Do not allow things temporal so to engross the mind as to lead you to forget things unseen and eternal. Be, I say, a good tradesman; but then, be a good Christian also. The latter, instead of hindering, will help the other. You may never live to be a master.

4. Mental cultivation leads many to neglect religion. I wish you to cultivate your mind. Get all the knowledge you can. Do not be ignorant. But recollect at the same time, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Science, literature, the arts, history, poetry, valuable as they are, all relate to time. Religion, while it is valuable for time, relates also to eternity. I again remind you, that you may die early; and then of what service will all your secular knowledge be? Oh! do not let knowledge be the god of your idolatry. Will it comfort you in affliction, guard you in danger, guide you in difficulty, support you in death, prepare you for heaven? The best knowledge is that which the Bible supplies; and all other arts and sciences will help to illustrate and confirm this.

5. Prejudice against the ways of religion as gloomy,

keeps many from yielding to its claims. Many young people seem to compare religion to a dark subterranean cavern, in descending to which, you quit all that is joyous in life: which is impervious to the light of heaven, and inaccessible to the melodies of creation; where nothing meets the eye but tears, nor the ear but sighs; where the inhabitants, arrayed in sackcloth, converse only in groans; where, in short, a smile is an offence against the superstition that reigns there, and a note of delight would be avenged by the awful genius of the place, by the expulsion of the individual who had dared to be cheerful. This religion? No, my children, I will give you another figurative view of it. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table; she hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." This is a metaphorical description of religion under the name of wisdom, and the figure of a feast. It is declared in revelation, and all the saints in the universe will confirm the truth of the assertion, that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

6. An inconsiderate, heedless temper is with many an obstruction to piety. There is frequently in persons of your age and circumstances, a peculiar thoughtlessness of mind; a want of calm consideration and steady reflection. They do not deliberate and ponder. Their minds seem as light as thistle-down, and as volatile as the butterfly. They are always walking, talking, and smiling, but rarely thinking. The meditative mood, the contemplative attitude, is never theirs. If you want

them, never look for them at home, but watch for them abroad. Their extreme volatility prevents them from giving due heed even to the concerns of the world; and as for religion, though they are immortal creatures, lost sinners invited to salvation, destined to eternity, and hastening to heaven or hell, they have scarcely ever had a serious thought upon the subject: even these momentous topics are treated with the utmost lightness of mind. If the eye of any of this class shall range over these pages, let me beseech them to look at their picture, and ask themselves if they can admire it. O, my young friends, cannot the high themes of eternity make you serious? Placed as you are, on this earth, between the torments of the damned, and the felicities of the redeemed: with the preparations for judgment going on, and the scenes of eternity opening before you; will you laugh out your little share of existence, and flutter through life, till, like a bird dropping into a volcano, you fall into the bottomless pit! Let these things soberise your thoughts, and bring you to the subject of religion, with something like an appropriate seriousness of mind.

7. Evil companions have often proved an obstruction to young people in the ways of piety. Young people are generally inclined to company, and too often it becomes a snare to them. Many a hopeful youth, that seemed at one time setting out in the ways of piety, has been arrested in his career by some unsuitable associate, with whom he has joined himself in the bonds of friendship; and thus he who seemed beginning in the spirit, has ended in the flesh, leaving his pious friends to exclaim in the tone of grief and disappointment, "You did run well, who did hinder you?" How difficult is it,

when a young person is first brought under the influence of genuine piety, to break from his former gay companions; and yet, if he would persevere in his new course, it must be done. In such cases the bonds of association must be broken. You must give up your society or your salvation: and can you hesitate?

8. The misconduct of professing Christians proves to many young persons, a stone of stumbling at the entrance of the path of godliness, especially if these inconsistent professors are their parents. They see immorality or hypocrisy in those who profess to be partakers of true piety, and, under the influence of disgust and disappointment, are ready to conclude that all are alike, and that there is no reality in religion, no truth in revelation. I know that these things must often prove hindrances in the ways of godliness, and have produced in some instances an unconquerable antipathy to religion. Yet is it rational to have our minds thus prejudiced against Christianity by the inconsistencies of those who were only its pretended disciples? But you exclaim, can that system be divine, amongst whose followers there are so many hypocrites? Can that system, I reply, be otherwise than divine, which has outlived them all, and triumphs alike over the injury it receives from its seeming friends, and the opposition of its real foes? Considering the numberless instances of this injury which have occurred, even from the beginning, I am persuaded that, had not Christianity been supported by Omnipotence, nothing more than the name of it, as an ancient delusion, would have reached the nineteenth century. No system unless sustained by a principle of divine life, could have survived so much internal decay, and so much external violence. Besides, does not the

perpetual effort to counterfeit it, prove its real excellence? For who imitates that which is worthless? Look at the bright, as well as at the dark, side. Against the troops of deserters and renegades, count up the thronging millions who have endured temptation, and continued faithful unto death. Call up the noble army of martyrs, whom neither dungeons nor fetters, scaffolds nor stakes, could intimidate; who held fast their principles amidst unheard of tortures, and suffered not the king of terrors to wring from their grasp the doctrines of their faith. Judge of religion, as it demands to be tried, by its own evidences, and not by the conduct of its professors. Look at it in its own light, and there you will derive a conviction of its truth and importance, which would make you cling to it in such a crisis that all other men should forsake it. Religion an imposture, because some of its professors are false! As rationally may you conclude that there is no real orb of day, because by an optical illusion mock suns are sometimes seen in the atmosphere. Remember, your neglect of religion will not be excused on the ground that your prejudices were shocked by the misconduct of professing Christians. Your obligations are in no degree dependent on the manner in which others discharge theirs.

9. A spirit of procrastination has considerable influence in preventing the young from attending to the claims of religion. This has been the ruin of multitudes now in hell. How many amongst the lost souls in prison are now rueing the cheat, which was practised upon their judgment, when they were persuaded to put off the affairs of eternity till another time! Perhaps there is not one in perdition, but intended to be religious at some future period. It is recorded of Archias, a

Greek magistrate, that a conspiracy was formed against his life. A friend who knew the plot, despatched a courier with the intelligence, and he, on being admitted to the presence of the magistrate, delivered to him a packet with this message: "My lord, the person who writes you this letter, conjures you to read it immediately, it contains serious matters." Archias, who was then at a feast, replied, smiling, "Serious affairs to-morrow," put the packet aside, and continued the revel. On that night the plot was executed, Archias on the morrow when he intended to read the letter, was a mutilated corpse, leaving to the world a fearful example of the effects of procrastination. My children, when God and the preacher say to-day, give your attention to religion, do not reply to-morrow: for alas! on that morrow you may be in eternity.

Young people are very apt to presume on long life; but on what ground? Have they any assurance of it? No, not for an hour. Is it a rare thing for young people to die? Go into any church-yard in the kingdom, and learn the contrary from the records on the tombs. Have you any security in the vigour of your constitution, from the melancholy change produced by decay and death?

"So have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was as fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness, and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and worn-out faces." Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Dying."

But besides, admitting that you should live, is not

your inclination likely to be, if possible, less and less towards religion? Your acts of sin will be confirmed into habits. Your heart will become harder and harder, for it is the nature of depravity to increase. If you wished to extinguish a fire, would you wait till it was a conflagration? if to cure a cold, would you wait till it was a fever?

What if God should withdraw his Spirit, and give you up to total insensibility! For consider, his grace is necessary to salvation. Religion is the work of God in the soul of man. Despised and rejected to-day, is he not likely to abandon you to-morrow? Then what a situation shall you be in; like a barren rock, insensible both to the beams of the sun, and the showers of heaven! You may felicitate yourselves in these circumstances on the protraction of life, but it is your curse and not your blessing. You would tremble with indescribable horror, at the thought of going the next hour to the flame which is never to be quenched, you would account it the climax of ruin. No, it is not. I can tell you something worse than even this. What! worse than going immediately to the bottomless pit? Yes. To live longer abandoned by God; given up to the deceitfulness of sin, and to hardness of heart; left to fill up still more the measure of iniquity; this, this is worse than instant damnation. Horrible as it seems, yet it is true, that many now in torment wish they had been there before; and that they had not been permitted to live and commit sins, which are the sources of their bitterest sufferings.

These are amongst the most prevailing obstacles which often prevent young people from entering on a life of piety. Happy are they who by the grace of God

are enabled to surmount them, and press through these impediments into the kingdom of God.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, the contemplation of thy power, by which thou canst do all things thou willest to do, is at once an object of awe and reverence, and a source of consolation to me, thy weak, dependent creature. I have some desire, which though too weak, is I believe sincere, to be thy regenerated and adopted child, and to serve thee in righteousness and true holiness all the days of my life. O let me be justified by faith in the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ, and be willing to deny myself and take up my cross and follow after Christ. Truly is it said, the righteous are scarcely saved. O what difficulties to be surmounted; what enemies to be vanquished; what temptations to be resisted, in order to be, and to live as, a Christian. I am sometimes almost in despair, and say I shall never be able to follow Christ fully. Help me, I beseech thee, to surmount all these obstacles of which I have now read, they are many and great, but thou canst help me to overcome them. Save me from all vanity and self-conceit, so common to young persons of my age. Subdue my love of worldly pleasure. Help me to be industrious in my worldly calling, and also to keep in due bounds with respect to this, so that in attending to this world I may not forget the next. Let me not entertain prejudice against the ways of godliness, as if they were gloomy. Give me grace to be thoughtful, and to overcome the heedlessness of youth. Preserve me from evil companions. Let not the misconduct and inconsistencies of professing Christians have any unfavourable influence upon my mind; seeing that religion is to be tried by the Bible rather than by the conduct of those who profess it. And let me not be given up to a spirit of procrastination. O God, who is sufficient for these things. Save, Lord, or I perish. I cannot make way against obstacles so formidable without thy help. May I be willing and anxious to overcome them, and believe that thy grace is sufficient for me. Help me to be more than conqueror, through Jesus Christ. Amen

CHAPTER VII.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

The detection of deceit, if not a pleasant employment, is certainly a profitable one; and that man deserves well of society, who puts it upon its guard against a dangerous impostor. The object of this section of my book is to expose the greatest deceiver in the world, whose design is to cheat you, my dear children, not of your property, nor of your liberty, nor of your life; but of what is infinitely dearer than all these, the salvation of your immortal soul. His success has been frightful beyond description. Earth is full of his operations, hell of his spoils. Millions of lost souls bewail his success in the bottomless pit, as the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. Who is this impostor, and what is his name? Is it not the false prophet of Mecca? No. The spirit of paganism? No. The genius of infidelity? No. It is the human heart. It is to this that the prophet's description belongs, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." You will perceive that to the wiles of this deceiver, you are exposed. Let me then request your very serious attention, whilst I lay open to you some of his deep devices, and endless machinations. By the

deceitfulness of the heart, you are to understand the liability of our judgment to be perverted and misled by the depravity of our nature. And the following are the proofs of the fact.

1. The astonishing ignorance in which many persons remain of their own character and motives. It is with the mind, as with the countenance, every one seems to know it better than its possessor. Now is not this somewhat singular? With the power of introspection, with access to our own spirits every moment, is it not remarkable that any one should remain in ignorance of himself? Yet is it not the case of myriads? How often we hear persons condemning others for the very faults of which every one perceives that they themselves are guilty! We have a striking instance of this in David, when the prophet related to him the parable of the little ewe lamb. It is astonishing with what dexterity some persons will ward off the arrows of conviction which are aimed at their hearts, and give them a direction towards others. When in preaching or in conversation, a speaker is endeavouring in a covert way to make them feel that they are intended as the objects of his censure, they are most busily employed in fastening it upon others, and admire the skill, and applaud the severity with which it is administered. And when at length it becomes necessary to throw off the disguise, and to declare to them, "Thou art the man," it is quite amusing to see what surprise and incredulity they will manifest, and how they will either smile at the ignorance, or frown on the malice, which could impute to them faults of which, however guilty they may be in other respects, they are

totally innocent. This self-deception prevails to a most alarming extent, in the business of personal religion. The road to destruction is crowded with travellers, who vainly suppose that they are walking in the path of life, and whose dreams of happiness nothing will disturb, but the dreadful reality of eternal misery. How can this mistake arise? The Scripture most explicitly states the difference between a good man and a wicked one: the line of distinction between conversion and impenitence is broad, and deep, and plain. It can only be accounted for on the ground of the deceitfulness of the heart. Then, when conviction forces itself upon the mind, and the real character begins to appear, what a degree of evidence will be resisted, and on what mere shadows of proof will men draw a conclusion in their own favour! How they mistake motives which are apparent to every bystander: and, in some instances, even commend themselves for virtues, when the corresponding vices are rife in their bosoms!

2. Another proof of the deceitfulness of the heart, lies in the disguises which it throws over its vices. It calls evil good, and good evil. How common is it for men to change the names of their faults, and endeavour to reconcile themselves to sins, which under their own proper designations, would be regarded as subjects of condemnation. Thus intemperance and excess are called a social disposition and good fellowship; pride is dignity of mind; revenge is spirit; vain pomp, luxury, and extravagance, are taste, elegance, and refinement; covetousness, is prudence: levity, folly, obscenity, are innocent liberty, cheerfulness, and humour. But will a new name alter the nature of a vice? No: you may

clothe a swine in purple and gold, and dress a demon in the robes of an angel of light; and the one is a beast, and the other a devil still.

The same operation of deceit which would strip vice of its deformity, would rob holiness of its beauty. Tenderness of conscience is called ridiculous precision; zeal against sin is moroseness and ill-nature; seriousness of mind, repulsive melancholy; superior sanctity, disgusting hypocrisy; in short, all spiritual religion is nauseating cant, whining methodism, wild enthusiasm. It is however the climax of this deceitfulness, when vice is committed under the notion that it is a virtue; and this has been done in innumerable instances. Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing God service, while he was destroying the church. The bigots of Rome have persuaded themselves they were doing right while they were shedding the blood of the saints. O the depth of deceit in the human heart!

3. What a proneness is there in most persons to frame excuses for their sins, and by what shallow pretexts are they often led to commit iniquity. Ever since that fatal moment, when our first parents endeavoured to shift the blame of their crime from themselves, a disposition to apologize for sin, rather than to confess it, has been the hereditary disease of their offspring. It discovers itself early in the human character; and it is truly affecting to see what great adroitness is manifested by very young children in excusing their faults; and this disposition grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength. So some men excuse their sins on the ground of custom: others plead the smallness of their sins; others endeavour to persuade themselves that the suddenness

and strength of temptation, will be admitted as a justification of their conduct; while some plead the power of example; it is the first offence, say some; it is the force of habit, exclaim others; some attempt to find excuse for their actual sins in the inherent depravity of their nature; others in the peculiarity of their temper and constitution; a few go so far as to lay all their sins upon the Author of their nature. These are but some amongst the many excuses, by which men are first led on to sin; by which they afterwards defend themselves against the accusations of conscience; and which most convincingly demonstrate the deep deceitfulness of the human heart.

4. It is proved also by the gradual and almost insensible manner in which it leads men on to the commission of sin. No man becomes wicked all at once. The way of a sinner in his career has been compared to the course of a stone down a steep hill, the velocity of which is accelerated by every revolution. The heart does not offend and shock the judgment by asking for too much at first; it conceals the end of the career, and lets only so much be seen as is required for the immediate occasion. When the prophet of the Lord disclosed to Hazael his future enormities, he exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this?" The exclamation was perfectly honest. At that time, no doubt, he was incapable of such wickedness, and it was a sincere revulsion of nature which prompted the expression of his abhorrence. But he knew not his heart. Little by little he was led forward in the course of iniquity, and at length exceeded by his wickedness the prophet's prediction. Habit renders all things easy, not excepting the most atrocious crimes. Men have often

without reluctance or remorse, done that which at one period of their lives they would have shuddered to think of. Many have committed forgery, who at one time could not have been persuaded by any arguments, or induced by any motives, to wrong an individual of a farthing; and the murderer whose hands are stained with blood, would, probably a few years or months before, have trembled at the idea of destroying an animal.

"When the heart of man is bound by the grace of God, and tied in the golden bands of religion, and watched by angels, and tended by ministers, those nurse-keepers of the soul, it is not easy for a man to wander, and the evil of his heart is like the fierceness of lions' whelps: but when he has once broken the hedge, and got into the strength of youth, and licentiousness of ungoverned age, it is wonderful to observe what a great inundation of mischief, in a very short time, will overflow all the banks of reason and religion. Vice is first pleasing, then it grows easy, then it is delightful, then it is frequent, then habitual, then confirmed, then the man is independent, then he is obstinate, then he resolves never to repent, then he dies, then he is damned." Jeremy Taylor's Sermons.

I have somewhere read of one of the early Christians, who, on being asked by a friend to accompany him to the amphitheatre, to witness the gladiatorial combats with wild beasts, expressed his utmost abhorrence of the sport, and refused to witness a scene condemned alike by humanity and Christianity. Overcome, at length, by the continued and pressing solicitations of his friend, whom he did not wish to disoblige, he consented to go; but determined that he would close his eyes as soon as he had taken his seat, and keep them closed during the whole time that he was in the amphitheatre. At some particular display of strength and skill by one of the combatants, a loud shout of applause was raised by the spectators, when

the Christian almost involuntarily opened his eyes; being once open he found it difficult to close them again; he became interested in the fate of a gladiator who was then engaged with a lion. He returned home, professing to dislike, as his principles required him to do, those cruel games; but still his imagination ever and anon reverted to the scenes he had unintentionally witnessed. He was again solicited by his friend, who perceived the conquest that had been made, to see the sport. He found less difficulty now than before in consenting. He went, sat with his eyes open, and enjoyed the spectacle. Again and again he took his seat with the pagan crowd, till at length he became a constant attendant at the amphitheatre, abandoned his christian principles, relapsed into idolatry, died a heathen, and left a fatal proof of the deceitfulness of sin.

When a young man who has received a pious education, begins to be solicitous to break through the restraints imposed upon him by conscience, he can venture only on lesser sins; he perhaps only takes a walk on the Sabbath with a friend, or goes to see a play, or joins in a midnight revel: but this is not done with ease; he hears the voice of an internal monitor, starts, and hesitates, but complies. A little remorse follows, but it is soon worn off. The next time temptation presents itself, his reluctance is diminished, and he repeats the offence with less previous hesitation, and less subsequent compunction. What he did once, he now without scruple does frequently. His courage is so far increased, and his fear of sin is so far abated, that he is soon emboldened to commit a greater sin, and the tavern and the horse-race are frequented with as little reluctance as the theatre. Conscience now and

then remonstrates, but he has acquired the ability to disregard its warnings, if not to silence them. In process of time, the society of all who make the least pretensions to piety is avoided as troublesome and distressing, and the heedless youth joins himself to companions better suited to his taste. Now his sins grow with vigour under the fostering influence of evil company, just like trees which are set in a plantation. By this time the Bible is put out of sight, all prayer is neglected, and the Sabbath constantly profaned. At length he feels the force of custom, and becomes enslaved by inveterate habit. The admonitions of a father, and the tears of a pious mother, produce no impressions, but such as are like the "morning cloud, or early dew, which soon passeth away." He returns to the society of his evil associates, where parental admonitions are converted into matter of wicked sport; the sapling is deeply rooted in vice; the sinner is settled in an evil way; and the voice of conscience is but rarely heard, and only as the feeble whisper of a dying friend. His next stage is to lose the sense of shame. He no longer wears a mask, or seeks the shade, but sins openly, and without disguise. Conscience is now quiet; and without spectre to warn, or angel to deliver, he pursues without a check the career of sin. He can meet a saint without a blush, and hear the voice of warning with a sneer. Would you believe it? He glories in his shame, and attempts to justify his conduct. Not content with being wicked, he attempts to make others as bad as himself, puts on the character of an apostle of Satan, and, like his master, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. As he is condemned in all his ways by the Bible, he en-

deavours to get rid of the troublesome judge, and persuades himself that religion is a cheat. With infidel principles, and immoral practices, he now hurries to destruction, polluted and polluting. His parents, whose grey hairs he brought in sorrow to the grave, have entered on their rest, and in mercy are not permitted to live to witness his shame. His vices lead him to extravagance; his extravagance is beyond his resources, and in an evil hour, under the pressure of claims which he is unable to meet, he commits an act which forfeits his life. He is arrested, tried, convicted, condemned, executed.

This is no fancy picture; it has often occurred. My dear children, see the deceitfulness of sin. Meditate, tremble, and pray. Be alarmed at little sins, for they lead on to great ones; at acts of sin, for they tend to habits; at common ones, for they issue in those that are uncommon. I have read of a servant who went into a closet, with an intention only to gratify his palate with some sweetmeats, but perceiving some silver articles, he relinquished the meaner prey for them, purloined them, became a confirmed thief, and died at the gallows. Many a prostitute who has perished in a garret upon straw, commenced her miserable and loathsome course with mere love of dress. Sin is like a fire, which should be extinguished in the first spark, for if it be left to itself, it will soon rage like a conflagration.

5. The last proof of the deceitfulness of the heart which I shall advance is, the delusive prospects which it presents to the judgment.

Sometimes it pleads for the commission of sin on the ground of the pleasure which it affords. But while it

speaks of the honey of gratification, does it also tell of the venom of reflection and punishment?

At other times it suggests that retreat is easy in the career of sin, and may be resorted to if its progress be inconvenient. Is it so? The very contrary is true. Every step we advance renders it more and more difficult to return.

Then it urges us forward with the delusive idea that it is time enough to repent in old age. But does it say, what indeed is true, that for aught you know, you may die to-morrow? No; and herein is its deceit.

It dwells upon the mercy of God: but is silent upon the subject of his justice.

What think you now of the human heart? Can you question its deceitfulness, or that it is deceitful above all things? How then will you treat it?

Think meanly of it. Surely with such a picture before you, you will not talk of the moral dignity of human nature; because this would be to talk of the dignity of falsehood and imposition.

Seek to have it renewed by the Holy Ghost. It is a first principle of religion, that the heart must be renewed, and here you see the need of it. It is not only the conduct which is bad, but the heart; and therefore it is not only necessary for the conduct to be reformed, but the nature must be regenerated. It is the heart which imposes upon the judgment, and the judgment which misleads the conduct; and therefore the root of the evil is not touched until the disposition is changed.

Suspect the heart and search it. Treat it as you would a man who had deceived you in every possible way, and in innumerable instances had been proved to

be false. Continually suspect it. Always act under the supposition that it is concealing something that is wrong. Perpetually examine it. Enter the house within you; break open every door; go into every apartment; search every corner; sweep every room. Take with you the lamp of revelation, and throw a light on every hiding place.

Watch the heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life. You would observe every attitude, every movement, every look, of an imposter who had fixed his eye upon your person and property. Treat your hearts thus. Let every thought, every imagination, every desire, be placed under the most vigilant and ceaseless inspection.

Place it in the hand of God to keep it. "My son, give me thine heart," is his own demand. Give it to him, that it may be filled with his love, and kept by his power. Let it be your daily prayer, "Lord, hold thou me up and I shall be safe; keep me by thy power through faith unto salvation."

PRAYER.

O God, thou searchest the hearts and triest the reins of the children of men, help me ever to remember that thou knowest my thoughts afar off, and art far better acquainted with me, than I am with myself. Thou hast declared in thy Holy Word, and I now know it by experience and observation, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Save me, I beseech thee, O God, from this internal deceiver which I ever carry about with me in my own bosom. Let me not be led astray by this destructive and ever present impostor, nor allow me to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Suffer me never to confound the distinction between

good and evil, so as to call good evil, or evil good. May I cast away all excuses for that which admits of no excuse, defence, or palliation. Instead of extenuating my transgressions, may I see them in all their enormity and aggravations. O save me from the insidious nature of sin, which leads the transgressor onward by such insensible degrees. May I tremble to take the first wrong step, and as I would not be enslaved by sinful habits, may I avoid sinful acts. May I never harken to sin's delusive promises; and do thou turn away my eyes from its false, though flattering, prospects. Help me to watch and pray, lest I enter into temptation. Keep me from the path of the destroyer. Search me, and know my ways, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Grant this, I beseech thee, O Lord, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRANSIENT RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS.

"The church," said Saurin, "had seldom seen happier days, than those described in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. God had never diffused his benedictions on a people in a richer abundance. Never had a people gratitude more lively, piety more fervent. The Red Sea had been passed; Pharaoh and his insolent court were buried in the waves; access to the land of promise was opened; Moses had been admitted to the holy mountain to derive felicity from God the source, and sent to distribute it amongst his countrymen: to these choice favours, promises of new and greater blessings yet were added; and God said, 'Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, although all the earth be mine.' The people were deeply affected with this collection of miracles. Each individual entered into the same views, and seemed animated with the same passion; all hearts were united, and one voice expressed the sense of all the tribes of Israel; 'all that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' But this devotion had one great defect, it lasted only forty days. In forty days the deliverance out of Egypt, the catastrophe of Pharaoh, the passage of the Red Sea, the articles of the covenant; in forty days promises, vows, oaths, all were effaced from the heart, and forgotten. Moses was absent, the lightning did not glitter, thunder-claps did not roar, and 'the Jews made a calf in Horeb, worshipped that molten image, and changed their glorious God into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.'"

Here, my children, is a most melancholy instance of transient devotion. Alas! that such instances should

be so common. Alas! that Jehovah should so frequently have to repeat the ancient reproach, and his ministers have to echo, in sorrowful accents, the painful complaint, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away." Nothing, however, is more common than such fugitive impressions. Disappointment of the bitterest kind is very frequently experienced, both by parents and ministers, in consequence of the sudden turning aside of those young persons, who for awhile seemed to run the race that is set before us in the word of God. At one time they appeared to be inflamed with a holy ambition to win the prize of glory, honour, and immortality; we saw them start with eagerness, and run with speed; but after awhile, we met them returning to the barrier, leaving us in the bitterness of our spirits to exclaim, "Ye did run well, what did hinder you?"

The religion I am now describing is not the hypocrisy of the pretending Christian, nor is it the backsliding of the real one; it goes further than the first, but does not go so far as the last. It is sincere of its kind, and in that it goes further than hypocrisy; but it is unfruitful, and in that it is inferior to the piety of the weak and revolting Christian. It is sufficient to discover sin, but not to correct it; sufficient to produce good resolutions, but not to keep them; it softens the heart, but does not renew it; it excites grief, but it does not eradicate evil dispositions. It is a piety of times, opportunities, and circumstances, diversified a thousand ways, the effect of innumerable causes, but it expires as soon as the causes are removed.

Inconstans was a youth who had enjoyed a pious

education; he discovered many amiable qualities, and was often impressed by the religious admonitions he received; but his impressions soon wore off, and he became as careless about his eternal concerns as before. He left the parental roof, and was apprenticed; and his parents having taken care to place him in a pious family, and under the faithful preaching of the word, he still enjoyed all the external means of grace, and still, at times, continued to feel their influence. His attention was oftentimes fixed when hearing the word, and he was sometimes observed to weep. On one occasion in particular, when a funeral sermon had been preached for a young person, a more than ordinary effect was produced upon his mind. He returned from the house of God pensive and dejected, retired to his closet, and with much earnestness prayed to God, resolved to attend more to the claims of religion, and to become a real Christian. The next morning he read the Bible, and prayed, before he left his chamber. This practice he continued day after day. A visible change was produced in his deportment. His seriousness attracted the attention and excited the hopes of his friends. But, by degrees, he relapsed into his former state, gave up reading the Scriptures, then prayer; then he re-united himself with some companions from whom for a season he had withdrawn himself, till at length he was as unconcerned about salvation as ever. Some time after this, Inconstans was seized with a fever. The disease resisted the power of the medicine, and baffled the skill of the physician; he grew worse and worse. His alarm became excessive. He sent for his minister and his parents, confessed and bewailed his fickleness. What tears he shed! What sighs he uttered! What vows

he made! "Oh if God would but spare me this once; if he would but grant me one more trial; if he would but indulge me with one more opportunity of salvation, how would I improve it to his glory, and my soul's interest." His prayers were answered: he recovered. What became of his vows, resolutions, and promises? The degree of his piety was regulated by the degree of his malady. Devotion rose and fell with his pulse. His zeal kept pace with his fever; as one decreased the other died away, and the recovery of his health was the resurrection of his sins. Inconstans is at this moment, what he always was, a melancholy specimen of the nature of mere transient religion.

What is wanting in this religion? You will of course reply, "Continuance." This is true. But why did it not continue? I answer, there was no real change of heart. The passions were moved, the feelings were excited, but the disposition remained unaltered. In the affairs of this life, men are often led by the operation of strong causes to act in opposition to their real character. The cruel tyrant, by some sudden and most affecting appeal to his clemency, may have a spark of pity smitten from his flinty heart; but the flint remaining, the wretch returns again to his practices of blood. The covetous man may, by a vivid description of want and misery, be for a season melted to liberality; but, like the surface thawed for an hour by the sun, and frozen again immediately after the source of heat has retired, his benevolence is immediately chilled by the prevailing frost of his nature. In these cases, as in that of religion, there is a suspension of the natural disposition, not a renewal of it. All religion which does not spring from a regenerated mind must be

transient, by whatever cause it is produced, and with whatever ardour it may for a season be practised. It may, like the grass upon the house-top, or the grain that is scattered in unprepared soil, spring up and flourish for a time, but for want of root it will speedily wither away. Do not then, my dear children, be satisfied with a mere excitement of the feelings, however strong it may happen to prove; but seek to have the general bias of the mind renewed.

You cannot, if you only consider for a moment, suppose that these fugitive impressions will answer the ends of religion, either in this world, or in that which is to come. They do not honour God, they will not sanctify the heart, they will not comfort the mind, they will not save the soul, they will not raise you to heaven, they will not save you from hell. Instead of preparing you at some future time to receive the gospel, such a state of mind, if persisted in, has a most direct and dangerous tendency to harden the heart. What God in his sovereign grace may be pleased to effect, it is not for me to say; but as to natural influence, nothing can be more clear than that this fitful piety is gradually putting the soul further and further from true religion. Those who have trembled at the terrors of the Lord without being subdued by them, who have outlived their fears, without being sanctified by them, will soon come to that degree of insensibility which will enable them to hear without being appalled the most awful denunciations of divine wrath. Those who have been melted from time to time by the exhibitions of divine love, but have not been converted by it, will come at length to hear of it with the coldest indifference. It is a dreadful state of mind to be given up to a spirit of slumber, and a callous

heart; and nothing is more likely to accelerate the process, than occasional, yet ineffectual religious impressions. Can we conceive of anything more likely to induce Jehovah to give us up to judicial blindness and insensibility, than this tampering with conviction, this trifling with devotional impressions? The pious emotions which are occasionally excited, are kind and gentle admonitions that He has come near to the soul, with all the energies of His Spirit: they are the work of mercy knocking at the door of our hearts, and saying, "Open to me that I may enter with salvation in my train." If they are from time to time neglected, what can be looked for but that the celestial visitor should withdraw, and pronounce, as he retires, the fearful sentence, "Woe unto you when my Spirit departeth from you."

There is something inexpressibly wicked in remaining in this state of mind. Such persons are in some respects more sinful than those whose minds have never been in any degree enlightened; whose fears have never been in any degree excited; who have paid no attention whatever to religion, but whose minds are sealed up in ignorance and insensibility. When persons who have taken some steps in religion turn again; when those who have come near the kingdom of God, recede from it; and those who have sipped, as it were, of the cup of salvation, withdraw their lips from the waters of life, the interpretation of their conduct is this, "We have tried the influence of religion, and do not find it so worthy of our cordial reception as we expected; we have seen something of its glory, and are disappointed; we have tasted something of its sweetness, and, upon the whole, we prefer to remain without it." Thus they are like the spies who brought a false report

of the land of promise, and discouraged the people. They defame the character of true piety, and prejudice men's minds against it. They libel the Bible, and persuade others to have nothing to do with religion. My children, can you endure the thought of this?

Mere transient devotions have a great tendency to strengthen the principle of unbelief in our nature. It is not only very possible, but very common, for men to sin themselves into a state of despair of God's mercy; and none are so likely to do this, as those who have repeatedly gone back to the world after seasons of religious impression. In our intercourse with society, if we have greatly offended and insulted a man after professions of decided friendship and warm attachment, we can hardly persuade ourselves to approach him again, or be persuaded to think he will admit us again to the number of his friends. And, as we are prone to argue from ourselves to God, if we have frequently repented, and as frequently returned again to sin, we shall be in great danger of coming to the conclusion that we have sinned past forgiveness, and abandon ourselves to guilt and despair. I have read of a gentleman who lived without any regard to religion till he was taken alarmingly ill, when his conscience was roused from its slumber, and he saw the wickedness of his conduct. A minister was sent for, to whom he acknowledged his guilt, and begged an interest in his prayers, at the same time vowing that if God would spare his life, he would alter the course of his behaviour. He was restored to health, and for a while was as good has his word. He set up family worship, maintained private prayer, and frequented the house of God; in short, appeared to be

a new man in Christ Jesus. At length he began to relax, and step by step went back to his former state of careless indifference. The hand of affliction again arrested him. His conscience again ascended her tribunal, and in terrible accents arraigned and condemned him. The state of his mind was horrible. The arrows of the Lord pierced him through, the poison whereof drank up his spirits. His friends entreated him to send for the minister, as above. "No!" he exclaimed, "I who have trifled with the mercy of God once, cannot expect it now!" No persuasion could shake his resolution; no representation of divine grace could remove his despair; and, without asking for pardon, he died. The same despair has, in many other instances, resulted from the sin of trifling with religious impressions.

These pages will probably be read by some, whose minds are under religious concern. Your situation is more critical and important than any language which I could employ would enable me to represent. If your present anxiety subsides into your former carelessness, you are in the most imminent danger of being left to the depravity of your nature. God is now approaching you in the exercise of his love, and waiting that he may be gracious. Seek him while he is to be found, call upon him while he is near. The soft breezes of celestial influences are passing over you, seize the auspicious season, and hoist every sail to catch the breath of heaven. Tremble at the thought of losing your present feelings. Be much and earnest in prayer to God, that he would not suffer you to relapse into unconcern and neglect. Take every possible means to preserve and deepen your present convictions. Read the Scrip-

tures with renewed diligence. Go with increased earnestness, and interest, and prayer, to the house of God. Endeavour to gain clearer views of the truth as it is in Jesus, and labour to have your mind instructed as well as your heart impressed. Be satisfied with nothing short of a renewed mind, the new birth. Be upon your guard against self-dependence. Watch against this, as much as against grosser sins. Consider yourself as a little child who can do nothing without God. Study your own sinfulness in the glass of God's holy law. Grow in humility; it is not well for a plant to shoot upwards quickly, before it has taken deep root; if it has no fibres in the earth, and no moisture at its root, whatever blossoms or fruit there may be in its branches, they will soon fall off; and in the same way, if your religion do not strike root in humility, and be not moistened with the tears of penitential grief, whatever blossoms of joy or fruits of zeal there may be on the mind or conduct, they will soon drop off under the next gust or heat of temptation. Take heed of secret sinning. A single lust unmortified, will be like a worm at the root of the newly-planted piety of your soul. Continually remember that it is yet but the beginning of religion with you. Do not rest here; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: nothing short of this will save you: without faith, all you have felt, or can feel, will do you no good; you must come to Christ, and be anxious to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God our Saviour.

Some, it is probable, will read these lines, who have had religious impressions, and lost them. Your goodness has vanished like the cloud of the morning, and,

like the early dew, has sparkled and exhaled. Sometimes you exclaim, with an emphasis of deep melancholy,

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their mem'ry still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

You are not, you cannot be happy. Oh no: the din of pleasure or of business cannot drown the voice of conscience; a pause now and then occurs, when its thunders are heard, and heard with indescribable alarm. Sometimes, in the midst of your pleasures, when all around you is jollity and mirth, you see a spectacle which others do not see, and are terrified by a mystic hand which writes your doom upon the wall. From that moment there is no more joy for you. Sometimes you almost curse the hour when the voice of a faithful preacher lodged conviction in your bosom, and half-spoiled you for a man of pleasure and the world. You almost look with envy on those, who, never having been taught to fear God, are wrapt in total darkness, and see not the dim spectres, the half-discovered shapes of mischief, which, in the twilight of your soul, present themselves to your affrighted vision. At other times, a little relenting, you exclaim, "O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined on my tabernacle! What would I give to recall the views and feelings of those days! Happy seasons! ye are fled like visions of spiritual beauty. And are ye fled for ever?" Can no power recall you to this happy state of mind? Yes, my young friend, these seasons are all within reach, lingering to return. Fly to God in prayer, beseech him to have mercy upon you. Implore him to rouse you from the slumber into which

you have fallen. Beware of the chilling influence of despondency. There is no room for despair. Covet the possession of true religion. Search for the cause which destroyed your impressions in the time that is past. Was it some improper companion? Abandon him for ever, as you would a viper. Was it some situation unfriendly to godliness which you voluntarily chose, as Lot did Sodom, on account of its worldly advantages? Relinquish it without delay. Escape for thy life, and tarry not in all the plain. Was it some besetting sin, dear as a right eye, or useful as a right hand? Pluck it out, tear it off, without hesitation or regret; for is it not better to make this sacrifice, than to lose eternal salvation, and endure everlasting torments? Was it self-dependence, self-confidence? Now put your case into the hand of Omnipotence, and call upon God. Ask for the Holy Spirit to renew, to sanctify, and to keep your soul. Learn from your past failure what to do, and what to avoid for the future. Believe the gospel, which declares that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It was faith that was wanting in the first instance, to give permanence to your religious impressions. There was no belief, no full persuasion, no practical conviction, of the truth of the gospel. Your religious feelings were like a stream raised by external and adventitious causes, but there was no spring. You stopped short of believing, you made no surrender of the soul to Christ, and did not commit yourselves to him, to be justified by his righteousness, and to be sanctified by his Spirit. This do and live.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of a change. My nature, both physical and moral, is the contrast of thine. I am but of yesterday, and know nothing, and am crushed before the moth. But I am more affected and humbled by my moral than by my natural instability. How apt am I to lose those spiritual impressions and convictions which are sometimes produced by the sermons I hear, the books I read, and the solemn dispensations of Providence I witness. I thank thee, that I am not altogether without religious concern. My heart is not entirely hardened: it is not quite like the rock on which neither sunshine nor rain makes any impression: I do sometimes feel. My sins often appear to me great, and I long for pardon and peace. I wish, and pray, and resolve; but I know that conviction is not conversion. How soon do I forget the resolutions which I make, and sink back from a state of anxiety into that of careless unconcern. I beseech thee, O God, to pity and pardon my fickleness, I know it is both wicked and dangerous thus to trifle with convictions. Do not in anger give me up to indecision. Take not the Holy Spirit from me, but renew the inworking of his mighty power. Deepen and perpetuate my impressions; strengthen my convictions; fix my wavering resolutions; and let me be really converted to thyself, and by thyself. Oh, help me to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset me, and run with earnestness, speed, and patience, the race that is set before me, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. Let me not be only an almost Christian, but altogether a servant of Christ, a child of God, an heir of glory. This is my prayer: Lord, hear it and answer it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

DECISION OF CHARACTER IN REFERENCE TO RELIGION.

How deep, and how just a reproach did the prophet cast upon the tribes of Israel, when he addressed to the assembled multitudes on Mount Carmel, that memorable interrogation "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him." From this it appears they were in a state of indecision, in reference to the most momentous question in the universe, not wholly satisfied that they were doing right in worshipping Baal, yet not sufficiently resolute to abandon his service. What a criminal, what a degrading, what a wretched, state of mind! Not decided whom they would acknowledge to be their God, to whom they would pay divine homage! But is this state of mind, my dear children, uncommon? By no means. To how many of the youth who attend our places of devotional resort, could we address, with propriety, the same question, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How many are there who can go no further than Agrippa, when he said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" Almost! Only almost persuaded to be a Christian! What a melancholy thought!

In the last chapter you saw, in the character of Inconstans, an instance of this indecision. Did you

admire it? Impossible. What was wanting? Decision. But what do I mean by decision?

"A fixed purpose, not made in haste, but with much deliberation; not in our own strength, but in reliance on the grace of God; without delay, and at all risks, to seek the salvation of the soul through faith in Christ, and to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.' It includes an inflexible severity of conviction, that this is the one great thing we have in this world to do, and such a concentration of all the energies of our soul in this mighty business, as, to idle spectators, shall put on the appearance of enthusiasm. It is such a purpose as subordinates every thing to itself. In opposition to transient devotion, it is permanent; in opposition to fluctuating opinions, it is a fixed, abiding resolution; in opposition to mere occasional acts, it is an indelible character, an indestructible habit. In short, it is faith in opposition to mere opinion and speculation: it is actually receiving Christ instead of talking about him. It is not like the vapour, which, after attracting every eye by its meteoric splendour, vanisheth away while yet the surprised and delighted spectator beholds its luminous course; but it is like the shining light which holds on its way in the heavens, and shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is attended with a relinquishment of former associations, former pursuits and pleasures, and the embracing of all such as are on the side of religion. We have a fine instance of this decision in the heroic leader of the hosts of the Lord, when looking round upon the wavering tribes of Israel, he exclaimed, "Let others do what they will, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Another example equally splendid, was presented by the great apostle of the Gentiles, when, with the perspective of his suffering career before his eyes, he gave utterance to that burst of sublime heroism 'None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might fulfil the ministry I have received of the Lord, and finish my course with joy.' Similar to this is the language of a decided Christian. 'Self-denial, ridicule, rage, mortification, loss, all are nothing to me, so that I may believe the gospel, live in the fear of God, die in his favour, and through the merits of Christ, be received to everlasting glory.'"

It will be proper to state here the reasons why so many who have strong impressions occasionally made upon their minds are not thoroughly and decidedly

engaged in the practice of religion. Some of these will be found in the chapter "On the Obstacles to Piety," but there are others which more peculiarly apply to the case before us.

There is in many a want of deep serious consideration. They do not follow up the subject of religion, even when it has been impressed with some degree of force upon their hearts. When emotions have been excited, they do not cherish them; but go to their usual conversation, company, or business, instead of entering into their closets to examine their hearts, and to apply the subjects they have heard. An officer in the army, when about to embark for the continent, came to a Christian friend, and told him that he had a great many serious thoughts about the state of his soul, and was resolved to lead a new life: "but," said he, "there is some company I must be with to night; I wish I could disengage myself from them." His friend of course attempted to dissuade him from joining the party. He notwithstanding went to them, forgot all his serious thoughts when there; was drawn into the revelry of the night; the following day went abroad; and the next news his friend heard of him was, that he was killed in action. Thus his vain companions extinguished his serious thoughts, diverted his good resolutions, and, with his own consent, robbed him of his eternal salvation.

Another cause of irresolution is the feeble and uncertain perception which many persons have of divine and spiritual things. They have a dim view of the truths of revelation, but they appear like objects in a mist, too indistinct to be made the matter of pursuit. Hence it is of tremendous consequence that when a young person becomes in any degree serious about

religion, he should instantly betake himself to all proper means for informing his judgment on the nature of true religion. He should read the Scriptures with intense application of mind, listen to the preaching of the word with great fixedness of attention, and peruse good books with much seriousness of mind.

The dominion of some one prevailing sin, if cherished and indulged, has a most fatal influence in preventing decision. Herod would do many things, but would not part from Herodias. Felix was moved by Paul's preaching, but he would not give up covetousness. Thus it is with many; they admit the claims of religion; admire its beauty; are moved by its force; resolve to submit to its influence; but there is some besetting sin, which when they come to the point, they cannot be induced to sacrifice. Every plant has one leading root which connects it with the soil in which it grows, on which, more than any of the rest, it is dependent for support and nourishment. So it is in the human heart; there is in every unconverted person some prevailing corruption of nature, which, more than any other, renders the unregenerate state dear to the heart, and heed must be given if we would be religious. This sin is different in different persons; but whatever it be, it must be destroyed, or it will destroy us.

Fear of persecution operates in many to prevent decision. You are deterred probably, my children, from giving up yourselves to the influence of piety, by the apprehensions that you will be called to endure the ridicule of those with whom you have been accustomed to associate, and who, being unfriendly to religion, vent their scorn and contempt on those who submit to its claims. It is impossible that I can be so ignorant of

the irreconcilable enmity existing, and destined ever to exist, between religion and the depravity of human nature; or of the usual practice of those who hate religion; as to promise you an exemption from the sneers of the scorner, if you walk in the paths of wisdom. The only weapons which many are able to wield against Christianity are sneers; for there is no mind so imbecile, no fool so foolish, as not to be able to laugh; the individual who can no more argue than an infant, can use the sword or brandish the spear of Goliath, can shoot out the lip, and cry methodist, puritan, and fanatic. The power to argue is comparatively rare, but almost every village in the kingdom will furnish a mob of little minds, to follow after religion as it passes by, and, like the children of Bethel, persecuting the prophet of the Lord, to ridicule its venerable form. A morbid sensibility to shame, I am perfectly convinced, has kept not a few young people from piety. This is especially the case with young men, and may, in some measure, account for the painful fact that so few of them, and especially of the well-educated class, become truly pious. They cannot bear the broad loud laugh, the contemptuous sneer, the witty jest. They cannot endure the attack of the profane, nor the raillery of the impious. They blush and conceal their secret attachment to piety directly it is assailed. But, my children, where is your mental dignity and courage? Are you really convinced of the truth of Christianity, and the justice of its claims, and yet suffer yourselves to be vanquished by the laugh of folly? What! flee from the enemy of your souls, and surrender your salvation, when he only hisses at you by the mouth of a fool? What though the world were to unite in scorn; shall this deter you from

acting, when God, truth, heaven, the Bible, conscience, salvation, saints, angels, are all on your side? What! when your spirit has plumed her wings of faith and hope for flight to heaven, shall she give up the dazzling object of her high ambition, and cower down on earth, because she is watched and ridiculed by the witling? Or shall her eagle pinions be blown from their lofty course by the scoff of the scorner? Be decided, and all this mean and feeble kind of persecution will soon cease. Before that sublime and unbending decision, which dares to be singular, which nothing can divert from its purpose, which nothing can cool in its ardour, which clings the closer to its object for all the efforts that are employed to detach it from the pursuit; I say, before that inflexible spirit, it is astonishing to see how the space clears away, and how soon she is left to pursue her course, while all the tribe of little, pecking, cavilling, noisy minds, drop down into their hedges, and leave the eagle to her course.

"This invincibility of temper," says the profoundest and most eloquent essayist in the English language, "will often make the scoffers themselves tired of the sport. They begin to feel that against such a man it is a poor kind of hostility to laugh. There is nothing that people are more mortified to spend in vain than their scorn. A man of the right kiud would say, upon an intimation that he is opposed by scorn, 'They will laugh, will they! I have something else to do than to trouble myself about their mirth. I do not care if the whole neighbourhood were to laugh in a chorus. I should indeed be sorry to see or hear such a number of fools, but pleased enough to find that they do not consider me one of their stamp. The good to result from my project will not be less, because vain and shallow minds, that cannot understand it, are diverted at it and at me. What should I think of my pursuits, if every trivial thoughtless being could comprehend, or would applaud them; and of myself, if my courage needed levity and ignorance for their allies, or could shrink at their sneers.'" Foster's "Essay on Decision of Character."

My children, think of the importance of the matter to be decided upon, the service of God, the pursuit of immortality, the salvation of the soul. Shall false shame deter you from their pursuit? Think of the example of Jesus Christ, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Look at that divine sufferer, as he is presented to us in the hall of Pilate, when he was made the object of every species of scorn and indignity, and will you shrink from a few sneers and scoffs for him? Remember our Lord's most alarming language, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, and with the holy angels." Anticipate, if you can, the shame, the disgrace, the mortification, the torment, of being disowned, rejected, and abandoned by Christ, before assembled worlds; and let that be a preservative against being ashamed of him now.

It is time now to set before you the evil of indecision, as a motive to induce you to seek after the opposite temper.

Such a temper is most Unreasonable, if you consider both the importance of the subject, and the means you possess of coming to a speedy and right decision. Is it a matter of trifling moment? Yes, if God, and eternity, and salvation, and heaven, and hell, are trifles. If religion is a trifle, where, in all the universe, shall we find any thing important? Irresolution as to this is to be undetermined whether you will be the friend or the enemy of God; whether you will live in this world under the favour or the curse of Jehovah, and in the world to come in the torments of the bottomless pit,

or amidst the felicities of the heavenly city; whether you will choose condemnation or salvation. There is no language which can describe, there is no allusion which can illustrate, the folly of indecision in religion. The irresolution of a slave, whether he should continue to groan in fetters or be free; of the leper, whether he should still be covered with the most loathsome disease, or enjoy the glow of health; of the condemned criminal, whether he should choose an honourable life, or the most torturing and ignominious death; is not marked with such desperate folly as an undecided state of mind about personal religion. The Scripture demands decision, and it demands it in these striking words, "See, I have set before thee this day life and death, good and evil; therefore choose." Yet some are undecided, whether they will serve God, their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, and inherit eternal life; or yield themselves to Satan, their destroyer, and suffer the bitter pains of eternal death. If the matter were involved in obscurity, as to what was your duty or your interest, there would be some apology; but when both are as clear as the day, the folly of indecision is so palpably manifest, as to entail a most fearful degree of guilt upon the conscience of the irresolute.

Indecision is Contemptible. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel," is a character which no one ever pretended to admire. In the ordinary affairs of life, indecision renders a man an object of pity or contempt.

"It is a poor, disgraceful thing not to be able to answer with some degree of firmness to the questions, What will you be? What will you do? It is a pitiable thing to see a creature with all the faculties of a rational being about him, so irresolute and undecided, as almost to wish that he could exchange reason for instinct, in order that he might be spared the trouble of thinking, and the pain

of choosing: a poor, dependent, powerless creature, that floats like a feather or a chip along the stream of time, belonging to whatever can seize him; and without one effort of resistance, whirled in every little eddy, and intercepted by every little twig."

But how much more disgraceful is this irresoluteness of mind in the affairs of religion, where there are so many means and so many motives for coming to a just conclusion. To be blown about like thistle-down by every wind of doctrine, and carried just wherever the gust or the current impels, is as dishonourable to our understanding as it is detrimental to our salvation.

Indecision is Uncomfortable. Suspense is always painful. Hesitation as to the steps we shall take, and the conduct we shall pursue, is a most undesirable state of mind: and this uneasiness will be in exact proportion to the importance of the business to be decided and to the degree of compunction we feel for not deciding upon a course, which, we cannot help thinking, is upon the whole, the right one. The undecided cannot be altogether easy in their present fluctuating state of mind. No; directed one way by conviction, and dragged another by inclination; determining at one time to serve God fully, and at another smarting under the guilt of broken vows; resolved on the Sunday, and irresolute on the Monday; sometimes advancing with courage, and then again retreating with fear and shame; no, this is not the way to be happy. You may as well expect peace on the field of battle, as in the bosom where such a conflict is carried on. Look up to God, and ask for grace to terminate by decided piety the dreadful strife, if indeed it be carried on in your breast.

Indecision is Dangerous. Consider the uncertainty

of life. How soon and how suddenly the King of Terrors may arrest you, and bear you to his dark domain! Some acute, inflammatory disease, in a few days may extinguish life; or a fatal accident, leaving you no leisure even to bid adieu to those you love on earth, may hurry you into eternity. And then what will become of you? In a state of indecision you are unprepared for death, for judgment, for heaven. You are within the flood-mark of Divine vengeance. God accounts all those to be decidedly against him, who are not decidedly for him. There is, properly speaking, no middle ground between regeneracy and unregeneracy, between conversion and unconversion, and therefore he that does not occupy the one, is found within the limits of the other. You are a child or an enemy of God. Whatever may be your occasional relentings, your transient emotions, your ineffectual desires, if you do not become decidedly pious, God will take no account of them, but treat you, if you die in this state, as one that had decided against him. Can you then linger, when death and hell do not linger? Can you halt, hesitate, and fluctuate, when death may the very next hour decide the business for you? And, oh! if you should die without decision, what will be your reflections and what will be ours! How bitterly will you exclaim, "Fool that I was, to let anything interfere with my eternal salvation; to let anything interpose between my soul and her everlasting welfare. Why, why did I hesitate? I saw the excellence, I coveted the possession, of religion. Often I felt my heart rising to go and surrender unreservedly to God: I wept, I prayed, I resolved; but that accursed lust, in which I took pleasure, held me fast, and rather than tear myself

from it, I let go the hope of eternal life. I was afraid of a little ridicule, which I ought to have disregarded or despised, and when I seemed near the kingdom, was ruined by indecision. While I hesitated, death seized me, and now I shall be exhibited, by the light of this flame in which I burn for ever, an awful proof of the folly and the danger of indecision. Woe, eternal woe, to my wretched spirit!"

Spare yourselves, my dear children, these dreadful reflections, this inconceivable torment. Without an hour's delay, resign yourselves to God and the influence of true religion. Decide the doubtful point. Believe and obey.

PRAYER.

Eternal and ever-blessed God, I address myself to thee at this time with the deepest earnestness and greatest solemnity, and at the same time with the most profound humiliation. I blush and am ashamed to lift up my face in thy presence, on account both of my wickedness and my weakness. Alas, alas, how great, how unreasonable, how sinful, has been my indecision on the plainest, most important, and most necessary concern in all this world. I confess that as soon as reason dawned I ought to have yielded up my heart to know, and love, and serve thee, without hesitation and without reserve. My childhood and my youth ought to have been given to thee. To halt and hesitate about a matter so obviously my duty and my privilege, is a guilty and shameful line of conduct. Thy claims to my best affections and most devoted life are so just, so pressing, and so plain, that to resist them, or even neglect them for a moment, is a crime which ought to cover me with confusion. Yet here I am, to this moment, a poor, wavering, undecided creature. Hesitating whether to serve God or Baal; whether to choose heaven or hell; salvation or damnation. Lord, have mercy, and fix my unsettled heart. Give me thy Holy Spirit, that I may come to an

intelligent, fixed, and irrevocable determination to be thine. I am not happy. I cannot be so. I wish not to be so in this undecided state. I am every moment exposed to death, and dying in my present condition I must be miserable for ever. O help me to put an end to this dreadful struggle. It is unworthy of me as a rational creature: and it is overwhelmingly guilty of me as a sinful and accountable one. Should I perish, my perdition will be the more dreadful, and my remorse more intolerable, for having been partly disposed to be a Christian, and yet not a decided one. Whatever prevents my decision, help me to discover it, and put it away. Let this be the day of thy power, in which I shall be made willing to be wholly thine. From this solemn hour, before I rise from my knees, inspire me with the resolution to say, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

THE PLEASURES OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

A DESIRE after happiness, my dear children, is inseparable from the human mind. It is a natural and healthy craving of our spirit; an appetite which we have neither the will nor the power to destroy, and which all mankind are intent on gratifying. This is as natural as for birds to fly, or fishes to swim. For this the scholar and the philosopher, who think it consists in knowledge, pore over their books and their apparatus, light the midnight lamp, and keep frequent vigils, when the world around them is asleep. The warrior, who thinks that happiness is inseparably united with fame, pursues that bubble over the gory field of conflict, and is as lavish of his life as if it were not worth a soldier's pay. The worldling, with whom happiness and wealth are kindred terms, worships daily at the shrine of Mammon, and offers earnest prayers for the golden shower. The voluptuary gratifies every craving sense, rejoices in midnight revels, renders himself vile, and yet tells you he is in the chase of happiness. All these, however, have confessed their disappointment; and have retired from the stage exclaiming, in reference to happiness, as Brutus, just before he stabbed himself,

did in reference to virtue, "I have pursued thee every where, and found thee nothing but a name." This, however, is a mistake; for both virtue and happiness are glorious realities, and if they are not found, it is merely because they are not sought from the right sources.

We may affirm of pleasure what Job did of wisdom, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. But where shall" happiness "be found, and where is the place of" enjoyment? "Man knoweth not the place thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. Whence, then, cometh" happiness, "and where is the place of" enjoyment? "seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder; then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Happiness has no other equivalent term than religion, and they are synonymes. If, indeed, the case were otherwise, and religion, so far as the present world is concerned, entailed nothing but wretchedness, yet, as

it leads to eternal felicity in the world to come, it is most manifestly our interest to attend to its claims. The poor Hindoo devotee, who endures all kinds of tortures, under the idea that it is the only way to eternal felicity, acts with perfect rationality, if you allow his data. A life protracted to the length of Methuselah's, and spent in penances and pilgrimages, should be willingly and thankfully endured, if salvation could be procured by no other means. In the prospect of eternity, with heaven spreading out its ineffable glories, and hell uncovering its dreadful horrors, the only question which a rational creature should allow himself to ask is, "What is necessary to avoid the torments of the one, and secure the felicities of the other?" and on being told "Religion," he should apply with all the energies of his soul to the great business, without scarcely allowing himself to ask whether its duties are pleasant or irksome. A prince journeying to take possession of a kingdom, scarcely thinks it worth his while to enquire whether the road be through a wilderness or a paradise. It is enough for him to know, that it is the only road to the throne. Hence the representation of the pleasures of religion is a sort of gratuity in this subject. It serves, however, to leave those still more destitute of excuse who live in the neglect of piety, and in this view may have still greater power to rouse the conscience.

1. It will appear, that religion is pleasure, if you consider what part of our nature it more particularly employs and gratifies. It is not a gratification of the senses, or of the animal part of our nature, but a provision for the immaterial and immortal mind. The mind of man is an image not only of God's spirituality,

but of his infinity. It is not like the senses, limited to one kind of object only, as the sight intermeddles not with that which affects the smell; but with a universal superintendence it arbitrates upon and comprehends them all. It is as I may say an ocean into which all the little rivulets of sensation, both external and internal, discharge themselves. Now this is that part of man to which the exercises of religion properly belong. The pleasures of the understanding in the contemplation of truth are with some men so great, so intense, and engross so entirely all the powers of their souls as to leave no room for any other kind of pleasure. How short of this are the delights of the epicure! How vastly disproportionate are the pleasures of the eating and of the thinking man! "Indeed," says Dr. South, "as different as the silence of an Archimedes in the study of a problem and the stillness of a sow at her wash." Nothing is comparable to the pleasures of mind; these are enjoyed by the spirits above, by Jesus Christ, and the great and blesssd God.

Think what objects religion brings before the mind, as the sources of its pleasure; no less than the great God himself, and that both in his nature and in his works. For the eye of religion, like that of the eagle, directs itself chiefly to the sun, to a glory that admits neither of a superior nor an equal. The mind is conversant in the exercises of piety with all the most stupendous events that have ever occurred in the history of the universe, or that ever will transpire till the close of time. The creation of the world, its government by universal providence, its redemption by the death of Christ, its conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit, its trial before the bar of God; the immortality of the

soul, the resurrection of the body, the certainty of eternal existence, the mysteries of the unseen state, subjects, all of them, of the loftiest and sublimest kind which can attract the inquiries of the profoundest intellects, are the matters which piety has ever in her contemplation. What topics are these for our reason under the guidance of religion to study: what an ocean to swim in, what a heaven to soar in: what heights to measure, what depths to fathom! Here are subjects which from their infinite vastness must be ever new, and ever fresh; which can be never laid aside as dry or empty. If novelty is the parent of pleasure, here it may be found; for although the subject itself is the same, some new view of it, some fresh discovery of its wonders, is ever bursting upon the mind of the devout and attentive inquirer after truth.

How then can religion be otherwise than pleasant, when it is the exercise of the noble faculties of the mind upon the sublimest topics of mental investigation; the voluntary, excursive, endless pursuits of the human understanding in the region of eternal truth? Never was there a more interesting or important inquiry than that proposed by Pilate to his illustrious prisoner; and if the Saviour thought not proper to answer it, it was not to show that the question was insignificant, but to condemn the light and flippant manner in which a subject so important was taken up. Religion can answer this question, and with an ecstacy greater than that of the ancient mathematician, exclaim, "I have found it: I have found it." The Bible is not only true but truth. It contains that which deserves this sublime emphasis. It settles the disputes of ages and of philosophers, and makes known what is truth, and where it is to be found. It brings us from

amongst the quicksands shelves and rocks of scepticism ignorance and error, and shows us that goodly land in quest of which myriads of minds have sailed, and multitudes have been wrecked, and assures our setting our feet on the shore, and dwelling in the region of eternal truth.

2. That a religious life is pleasant, is evident from the nature of religion itself. Religion is a principle of spiritual life in the soul. Now all the exercises and acts of life are agreeable. To see, to hear, to taste, to walk, are all agreeable, because they are the energies of life. So religion in all its duties is the exercise of a living principle in the soul; it is a new spiritual existence. Piety is a spiritual taste. Hence it is said, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." No matter what the object of a taste is, the exercises of it are always agreeable. The painter goes with delight to his picture; the musician to his instrument; the sculptor to his bust, because they have a taste for these pursuits. The same feeling of delight attends the Christian to the exercises of godliness; and this is his language, "It is a good thing to give thanks, and to draw near to God. O, how I love thy law! it is sweeter to my taste than honey. How amiable are thy tabernacles!" Religion is the natural element of a man; and every creature rejoices in its own appropriate sphere.

3. Consider the miseries which it prevents. It does not, it is true, prevent sickness, poverty, or misfortune; it does not fence off from the wilderness of this world a mystic enclosure within which the ills of life never intrude. No; these things happen to all alike; but how small a portion of human wretchedness flows from

these sources, compared with that which arises from the dispositions of the heart. "The mind is its own place, can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." Men carry the springs of their happiness or misery in "their own bosoms. Hence it is said of the wicked that they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, which is never at peace, but continually casting up mire and dirt." In contrast with this, it is affirmed, that "the work of righteousness is peace; and that the good man shall be satisfied from himself." Would you behold the misery entailed by pride, look at Haman; by covetousness, look at Ahab; by malice, look at Cain; by profaneness and sensuality, united with the forebodings of a guilty conscience, look at Belshazzar; by envy and a consciousness of being rejected of God, look at Saul; by revenge, look at Herodias, writhing beneath the accusations of John, and thirsting for his blood; by apostacy, look at Judas. Religion would have prevented all their miseries, and it will prevent similar misery in you. Hearken to the confessions of the outcast in the land of his wandering; of the felon in his irons and in his dungeon; of the prostitute expiring upon her bed of straw; of the murderer at the gallows; "Wretched creature that I am, abhorred of men, accursed of God! To what have my crimes brought me!" Religion, my children, prevents all this; all that wretchedness which is the result of crime is cut off by the influence of genuine piety. Misery prevented is happiness gained.

4. Dwell upon the privileges it confers. To the man who is a partaker of its genuine influence all the sins he has committed, be they ever so numerous or so great, are all forgiven, and he is introduced to the bliss of pardoned guilt; he is restored to the favour of that

Great Being whose smile is life, and lights up heaven with joy; whose frown is death, and fills all hell with woe. But I cannot describe these privileges in such brilliant language as has been employed by a trans-atlantic author;

"Regeneration is of the highest importance to man, as a subject of the divine government. With his former disposition he was a rebel against God, and with this he becomes cheerfully an obedient subject. Of an enemy he becomes a friend; of an apostate he becomes a child. From the debased, hateful and miserable character of sin, he makes a final escape, and begins the glorious and eternal career of virtue. With his character, his destination is equally changed; in his native condition he was a child of wrath, an object of abhorrence, and an heir of woe. Evil, in an unceasing and interminable progress, was his lot; the regions of sorrow and despair his everlasting home; and fiends, and fiend-like men, his eternal companions. On his character good beings looked with detestation, and on his ruin, with pity; while evil beings beheld both with that satanic pleasure which a reprobate mind can enjoy at the sight of companionship in turpitude and destruction.

"But when he becomes a subject of this great and happy change of character, all things connected with him are also changed. His unbelief, impenitence, hatred of God, rejection of Christ, and resistance of the Spirit of Grace he has voluntarily and ingenuously renounced; no more rebellious, impious, or ungrateful, he has assumed the amiable spirit of submission, repentance, confidence, hope, gratitude, and love. The image of his Maker is enstamped upon his mind, and begins there to shine with moral and eternal beauty. The seeds of immortality have there sprung up, as in a kindly soil; and warmed by the life-giving beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and refreshed by the dewy influence of the spirit of grace, rise and bloom and flourish with increasing vigour. In him sin and the world and the flesh daily decay, and daily announce their approaching dissolution; while the soul continually assumes new life and virtue, and is animated with superior and undying energy. He is now a joint heir with Christ, and the destined inhabitant of heaven; the gates of glory and of happiness are already opened to receive him, and the joy of saints and angels has been renewed over his repentance: all around him is peace, all before him purity and transport. God is his Father; Christ his Redeemer; and the Spirit of truth his Sanctifier.

Heaven is his eternal habitation; virtue is his immortal character; and cherubim, and seraphim, and all the children of light, are his companions for ever. Henceforth he becomes of course a rich blessing to the universe; all good beings, nay, God himself, will rejoice in him for ever, as a valuable accession to the great kingdom of righteousness, as a real addition to the mass of created good, and as an humble but faithful and honourable instrument of the everlasting praise of heaven. He is a vessel of infinite mercy; an illustrious trophy of the cross; a gem in the crown of glory, which adorns the Redeemer of mankind." Dwight's Sermon on Regeneration.

Who, my children, can read this animated description of the privileges of true and consistent piety, without secretly longing to be a child of God? What are all the brightest distinctions of an earthly nature, after which envy pines in secret, or ambition rages in public, compared with this? Crowns are splendid baubles, gold is sordid dust, and all the gratifications of sense but vanity and vexation of spirit, when weighed against such splendid immunities as these.

5. Consider the consolations religion imparts. Our world has been called in the language of poetry a vale of tears, and human life a bubble, raised from those tears and inflated by sighs, which, after floating a little while decked with a few gaudy colours, is touched by the hand of death and dissolves. Poverty, disease, misfortune, unkindness, inconstancy, death, all assail the travellers as they journey onward to eternity through this gloomy valley; and what is to comfort them but religion? The consolations of religion are neither few nor small; they arise in part from the sources already mentioned in this chapter, that is from the exercise of the understanding on the revealed truths of God's word, from the impulses of the spiritual life within us, and from reflection upon our spiritual privileges: but there are some matters, which though partly implied in what

I have stated deserve special enumeration and distinct consideration.

A good conscience, which the wise man says is a perpetual feast, sustains a high place amongst the comforts of genuine piety. It is unquestionably true that a man's happiness is in the keeping of his conscience; all the sources of his felicity are under the command of this faculty. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" A troubled conscience converts a paradise into a hell, for it is the flame of hell kindled on earth; but a quiet conscience would illuminate the horrors of the deepest dungeon with the beams of heavenly day: the former has often rendered men like tormented fiends amidst an elysium of delights, while the latter has taught the songs of cherubim to martyrs in the prison or the flames. Religion gives peace to the conscience; by faith in the blood of Christ it takes away guilt towards God, and by a holy life it keeps the conscience clear towards man. It first makes it good by justification, and then keeps it good by sanctification. What trouble may not a man bear beneath the smiles of an approving conscience! If this be calm and serene, the storms of affliction which rage without, can as little disturb the comfort of the mind, as the fury of the wintry tempest can do, to alarm the inhabitants of a well-built, well-stored mansion.

In addition to this, religion comforts the mind with the assurance of an all-wise, all-pervading Providence, so minute in its superintendence and control, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father; a superintendence which is excluded from no point of space, no moment of time, and overlooks not the meanest creature in existence. Nor is

this all; for the Word of God assures the believer that "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." Nothing that imagination can conceive is more truly consolatory than this, to be assured that all things, however painful at the time, (not excepting the failure of our favourite schemes, the disappointment of our fondest hopes, the loss of our dearest comforts,) shall be over-ruled by infinite wisdom for the promotion of our ultimate good. This is a spring of comfort whose waters never fail.

Religion consoles also by making manifest some of the benefits of affliction, even at the time it is endured. It crucifies the world, mortifies sin, quickens prayer, extracts the balmy sweets of the promises, endears the Saviour; and to crown all, it directs the mind to that glorious state where the days of our mourning shall be ended: that happy country where God shall wipe every tear from our eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow or crying. Nothing so composes the mind, and helps it to bear the load of trouble which God may lay upon it, as the near prospect of its termination. Religion shows the weather-beaten mariner the haven of eternal repose, where no storms arise, and the sea is ever calm; it exhibits to the weary traveller the city of habitation, within whose walls he will find a pleasant home, rest from his labours, and friends to welcome his arrival; it discloses to the wounded warrior his native country, where the alarms of war and the dangers of conflict will be no more encountered, but undisturbed peace for ever reign. In the one word heaven religion provides a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care.

The pleasure of that wisdom which is from above is

not only enjoyed in prosperity, but continues to refresh us, and most powerfully to refresh us, in adversity; a remark which will not apply to any other kind of pleasure. In the hour of misfortune, when a man, once in happy circumstances, sits down, amidst the wreck of all his comforts, and sees nothing but the fragments of fortune for his wife and family, what, in this storm of affliction, is to cheer him but religion? And this can do it, and enable him to say, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." What but religion can comfort the poor labourer in the gloomy season when times are bad and work is scarce, and he hardly knows where to procure his next meal? What can comfort the suffering female in that long and dreadful season, when, wasting away in a deep decline, she lies, night after night consumed by fever, and day after day convulsed by coughing? Tell me, what but religion can send a ray of comfort to her dark scene of woe, or a drop of consolation to her parched and thirsty lips? And when the agonized parent, with a heart half broken by the conduct of a prodigal son, exclaims "Oh! who can tell how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is, to have a thankless child?" what, in that season of torture, can pour a drop of balm into the wounded spirit but religion? And when we occupy the bedside of a departing friend, "the dreadful post of observation darker every hour," what but religion can sustain the mind, and calm the tumult of the soul? What, but this, can en-

able us to bear with even tolerable composure the pang of separation? And we, too, must die: and this is the excellence of piety, it follows us where no other friend can follow us, down into the dark valley of the shadow of death, stands by us when the hand has quitted its last grasp, reserves its mightiest energies for that most awful conflict, presents to the eye of faith visions of glory rising up beyond the sepulchre, and angels advancing to receive us from the hand of earthly friends, and bear us to the presence of a smiling God. Other sources of pleasure are open only during the season of health and prosperity. Admitting that they are all which their most impassioned admirers contend for, what can balls, routs, plays, cards, do in the season of sickness, misfortune, or death? Alas! alas! they exist then only in recollection, and the recollection of them is painful.

6. The pleasures of religion appear in the grace it implants. "And now abideth these three, Faith, Hope, Charity." Faith is the leading virtue of Christianity. To believe, in any case, where the report is welcome, and the evidence of its truth convincing, is a pleasing exercise of the mind: how much more so in this case, where the testimony to be believed, is the glad tidings of salvation, and the evidence of its truth most entirely satisfactory? Hope is a most delightful exercise. The pleasures of hope have formed a theme for the poet; and it is evident that these pleasures must be in proportion to the importance of the object desired, and the grounds that exist to expect its accomplishment. What, then, must be the influence of that hope which is full of immortality, which has the glory of heaven for its object, and the truth of God for its basis! which,

as it looks towards its horizon, sees the shadowy forms of eternal felicity rising, expanding, brightening, and advancing, every moment. Love is a third virtue, implanted and cherished in the soul by religion. Need I describe the pleasures connected with a pure and virtuous affection? Religion is love, love of the purest and sublimest kind; this is its essence, all else but its earthly attire, which it throws off as Elijah did his mantle when it ascends to the skies. The delight of love must be in proportion to the excellence of its object, and the strength of its own propensity towards that object. What, then, must be the pleasure of that love which has God for its object, and which consists in complacency in his glories, gratitude for his mercies, submission to his will, and the enjoyment of his favour! This is a heavenly feeling, which brings us into communion with angels, and anticipates on earth, the enjoyments of eternity. Submission, patience, meekness, gentleness, justice, compassion, zeal, are also among the graces which true religion implants in the human soul; which, like lovely flowers, adorn it with indescribable beauty, and refresh it with the most delicious fragrance.

7. Consider the duties which religion enjoins, and you will find in each of these a spring of hallowed pleasure. How delightful an exercise is prayer. "Prayer is the peace of our spirits, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempests; it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness." It is pleasant to tell our sorrows to any one; how much more to him who is omnipotent in power, infallible in wisdom, and infinite in compassion! With prayer is

connected praise, that elevated action of the soul, in which she seems at the time to be learning motion and melody from an angel. How pleasant an exercise is the perusal of the Scriptures! In prayer we speak to God, and in the Bible God speaks to us, and both confer upon us honour indescribable. Passing by the antiquity of its history, the pathos of its narratives, the beauty of its imagery, how sublime are its doctrines, how precious its promises, how free its invitations, how salutary its warnings, how intense its devotions! "Precious Bible! When weighed against thee all other books are but as the small dust of the balance." Nor less pleasant is the holy remembrance of the Sabbath! "I was glad," exclaims the Christian, "when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord;" and there when standing within the gates of Zion, surrounded with the multitude that keep holy day, he repeats, amidst the years of his manhood, the song of his childhood, and from the fulness of his joy, he exclaims,

> "Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
> A whole assembly worship Thee;
> At once they sing, at once they pray,
> They hear of heaven, and learn the way."

The sweetly-solemn engagements of the Sacramental Feast; the flow of brotherly love, called forth by social prayer, together with the ardour of benevolence inspired by the support of public religious institutions; in these exercises is true happiness to be found, if indeed it is to be found any where on earth.

8. As a last proof of the pleasures derived from religion, I may appeal to the experience of its friends. Here the evidences accumulate by myriads on earth,

and millions in heaven. Who, that ever felt its influence, will doubt its tendency to produce delight? Go, go, my children, to the saints of the most high God, and collect their testimony, and you shall be convinced that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Go not to the professor of doubtful character, for he has only just religion enough to make him miserable; go to the most holy, and you shall find them the most happy.

And there are also two or three other circumstances which are connected with the pleasures of religion that deserve attention. It is pleasure that never satiates or wearies. Can the epicure, the voluptuary, the drunkard, the ball-frequenter, say this of their delights?

"How short is the interval, how easy the transition between a pleasure and a burden. If sport refreshes a man when he is weary, it also wearies when he is refreshed. The most devoted pleasure-hunter in existence, were he bound to his sensual delights every day, would find it an intolerable burden, and fly to the spade and the mattock for a diversion from the misery of an unintermitted pleasure. Custom may render continued labour tolerable, but not continued pleasure. All pleasures that affect the body must needs weary, because they transport; and all transport is violence; and no violence can be lasting, but determines upon the falling of the spirits, which are not able to keep up that height of motion, that the pleasure of the senses raises them to; and therefore how generally does an immoderate laughter end in a sigh, which is only nature's recovering herself after a force done to it; but the religious pleasure of a well-disposed mind moves gently, and therefore constantly; it does not affect by rapture and ecstacy, but is like the pleasure of health, which is still and sober, yet greater and stronger than those which call up the senses with greater and more affecting impressions."

And as all the grosser pleasures of sense weary, and all the sports and recreations soon pall upon the appetite, so, under some circumstances, do the more elevated enjoyments of exalted rank, agreeable company, and

lively conversation; it is religion alone that preserves an unfading freshness, an undying charm, an inexhaustible power to please; it is this alone of all our pleasures which never cloys, never surfeits, but increases the appetite the more it gratifies it, and leaves it after the richest feast prepared and hungry for a still more splendid banquet.

And then another ennobling property of the pleasure that arises from religion is that as the sources and the seat of it are in a man's own breast, it is not in the power of any thing without him to destroy it or take it away. Upon God alone is he dependent for its enjoyment. Upon how many other agents, and upon what numerous contingencies over which he can exercise no control, is the votary of worldly pleasure dependent for his bliss. How many things which he cannot command are necessary to make up the machinery of his schemes! What trifles may disappoint him of his expected gratification, or rob him of his promised delights! A variable atmosphere, or the whim of a man or woman no less variable; a want of punctuality in others, or a want of health in himself: these, and a thousand other things, may be enumerated as circumstances, upon the mercy of each one of which, the enjoyment of worldly pleasure depends. "But the good man shall be satisfied from himself." "Whoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him," said Jesus Christ, "shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The piety of his heart, produced by the Holy Ghost, is this well-spring of pleasure, which a good man carries every where with him, wherever he goes. He is independent of all the contingencies of life for his bliss.

"It is an easy and a portable pleasure, such an one as he carries about in his bosom, without alarming the eye or the envy of the world. A man putting all his pleasures into this one, is like a traveller putting all his goods as it were, into one jewel; the value is the same, and the convenience greater. Nor is this kind of pleasure out of the reach of any outward violence only; but even those things also, which make a closer impression upon us, which are the irresistible decays of nature, have yet no influence at all upon this. For when age itself, which of all things in the world will not be baffled or defied, shall begin to arrest, seize, and remind us of our mortality, by pains, aches, and deadness of limbs, and dulness of senses, yet then the pleasure of the mind shall be in its full youth, vigour, and freshness. A palsy may as soon shake an oak, or a fever dry up a fountain, as either of them shake, dry up, or impair the delight of conscience; for it lies within, it centres in the heart, it grows into the very substance of the soul, so that it accompanies a man to his grave; he never outlives it, and that for this cause only, because he cannot outlive himself."

How comes it to pass then, that, in opposition to all this, the opinion has gained ground that religion leads to melancholy? The irreligious judge of it by their own feelings; and as they are not conscious of any pleasurable emotions excited by sacred things, they conclude that others in like manner are destitute of them. But is their testimony to be received before that of the individual who has tried and found it by experience to be bliss? Again, irreligious people form their opinion by what they see in many professors, some of whom, though professing godliness, are destitute of its power; and being more actuated by the spirit of the world than the spirit of piety, are strangers to the peace that passes understanding; others are not yet brought out of that deep dejection with which the earlier stages of conviction are sometimes attended. The sinner when first arrested in his thoughtless career is filled with dismay and the most poignant grief; in this state of mind his appearance may produce the idea that religion

is the parent of melancholy. But wait, he that sows in tears shall reap in joy. His tears, like showers in summer from a dark and lowering cloud, carry off the gloom which they first caused, portend a clearer and a cooler atmosphere, and are ultimately followed by the bright shining of the sun.

An unfavourable impression against religion is sometimes produced by the constitutional gloom of some of its genuine disciples. It should be recollected that in these cases religion does not cause the dejection, for that would have existed had there been no piety. All that can be said is that it does not cure it, which is not to be expected, unless piety pretended to exert an influence over the physical nature of man.

The supposition that piety leads to melancholy is also founded in part on the self-denying duties which the word of God enjoins. Penitence, self-denial, renunciation of the world, willingness to take up the cross and follow after Christ, are unquestionably required, and must be truly found in the genuine Christian. Hence the worldling thinks it impossible but that with such duties should be associated the most sullen and miserable state of mind. Little does he imagine that the pleasures which religion has to offer for those she requires us to abandon, are like the orb of the day to the glow-worm of the hedge, or the meteor of the swamp; and that for every moment's self-denial she requires us to endure, she has a million ages of ineffable delight to bestow.

"And now upon the result of all, I suppose that to exhort them to be religious, is only in other words to exhort them to take their pleasure; a pleasure high, rational, and angelical; a pleasure embased with no appendant sting, no consequent loathing, no remorses or bitter farewells; but such an one, as being honey in the mouth, never

turns to gall in the belly; a pleasure made for the soul, and the soul for that; suitable to its spirituality, and equal to its capacities; such an one as grows fresher upon enjoyment, and though continually fed upon, is never devoured: a pleasure that a man may call as properly his own as his soul and his conscience; neither liable to accident, nor exposed to injury; it is the foretaste of heaven, and the earnest of eternity; in a word, it is such an one as being begun in grace, passes into glory, blessedness, and immortality; and those joys that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man to conceive!*"

PRAYER.

Infinitely great, glorious, and gracious God, thou art the fountain of thine own blessedness, and of the blessedness of thy creatures. I thank thee, that thou hast formed me with a capacity for happiness, and an innate desire after it: and at the same time, hast provided the necessary means for attaining to it. Oh, keep me from attempting to gratify my thirst after bliss at the inadequate or polluting sources of worldly or sinful delights. Save me from being a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. May I ever consider the gratification of sinful appetites and vicious propensities as both unworthy my faculties as a man, and destructive of my soul as an immortal creature. Let me not be given up to light and frivolous pursuits; to tastes which are below the dignity, and unequal to the capacity, of a soul which thou hast formed for the enjoyment of thyself. May I know by experience that religion only can supply that happiness which can satisfy the desires of an immortal mind. Lead me by thy good Spirit into wisdom's ways of pleasantness, and into her paths of peace. In true faith in Christ may I find joy and peace, in communion with God, in a good conscience, in the practice of holiness, in the social virtues, in the exercises of devotion, in the activities of benevolence and zeal, and in the hope of heaven, may I find my happiness; a happiness so satisfying as to leave no desire for the frivolous amusements, or the corrupting pleasures of the world, and so pure as to cast no stain upon the heart, and produce no remorse in the conscience. Thus dispose and enable me to begin the happiness of heaven upon earth, and commence in time the joys of eternity. Hear me, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

* This, and the other quotations, are from Dr. South's Sermon on Prov. iii, 7.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

A QUAINT but eminently spiritual poet of the last century has a poem entitled, "Strife in Heaven:" a singular idea to attach to that region of untroubled repose. The design of the piece however is ingenious and interesting. A company of the redeemed above are represented as discussing, in a spirit of perfect love, the question, "Which of them was most indebted to divine grace for his salvation?" Amongst these grateful and holy litigants, two appeared to have claims for the greatest weight of obligation to sovereign mercy so nearly balanced, as to render it difficult to say which owed most. One was a glorified spirit, converted in old age after a long life of sin; the other was a saint redeemed in youth, and who spent as long a life in holiness. The one contended, that his forgiveness, after such a lengthened course of vice and destructive conduct, made him the greatest monument of saving love in heaven; "except," exclaimed the other, "myself; who, by divine grace, was prevented from that course of sin, and was enabled by religion to spend my years in holiness and usefulness." I think the happy throng must have confessed the justice of the younger seraph's

claims; omniscient wisdom from the throne must have confirmed their judgment; and in heaven it must have been decided that those owe most to sovereign grace who have been called by its power to the service of God in their youth.

Youth is a season which presents peculiar advantages for the pursuit of piety. It is attended, in general, with more leisure and less care, than any subsequent period of life. As yet, my children, you are not entangled in the concerns of business, or the cares of a family. The ten thousand tumultuous anxieties of a father or mother, a master or mistress, do not yet fill your minds, and exclude all other topics. Tell us, ye fathers, struggling with the difficulties of a precarious trade; and ye mothers, absorbed in the duties of a rising family; which, think ye, is the best time to begin the pursuits of eternal life? With tears they respond, "Seize! O seize, young people, the halcyon days of youth!"

Youth is a season of greater susceptibility of mind than any which follows it. In the spring-time of nature the soil is best prepared for the reception of the seed, and the energies of vegetation are most vigorous; so it is with the mind. In youth the heart is more easily impressed, the affections more readily moved, the imagination is more lively. You have an ardour and fervency most remote from the timid hesitating caution of age, and eminently favourable to conversion. Disdaining all resistance, ambitious of great achievements, full of high resolves, and leaping over opposing obstacles, youth surveys, with sparkling eyes, the crown of its wishes, braces itself for action, and flies to the goal; whilst age, creeping fearfully along, afraid of every difficulty, discouraged by the least resistance, can scarcely be im-

pelled to move. I know that these things of themselves are not sufficient to make you holy; but when grace sanctifies them, and directs them to proper objects, they must render your entrance on religion more easy, your progress more rapid, and your enjoyment more strong.

Youth are less hardened in sin than persons of riper years. The depravity of our nature grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. Like a tree, it strikes its roots deeper, and takes a faster hold on the soil every year. You have principles of corruption already in your hearts, my children, but they have not by long indulgence become so stiffened into habit, as they may be at some future time. Your prejudices and prepossessions are yet few and feeble. As yet the sentiments of modesty and propriety, and a regard to the opinions of others, would make you blush for acts of vice, and endeavour to conceal them from the world. In riper years you will assume a boldness in iniquity, disregard the censures of others, and cease to be restrained by them. Conscience has not yet been deeply corrupted; it still preserves something of its tremulous delicacy and nice sensibility; it still elevates its warning voice, and strongly remonstrates against your least deviation from the path of virtue; but in the aged sinner, weary of useless reproof, it is almost silent, or totally disregarded. We know that without divine grace conversion, even in any case, cannot take place; but we know at the same time by observation, that divine grace very often follows in the order of nature.

Youth are pre-eminently encouraged to seek the possession and influence of piety. There are many invitations promises and injunctions specially addressed

to them. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "I love them that that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Under the Jewish dispensation, God called for the first-fruits of all things, intending no doubt, to teach amongst other lessons, his delight in the dedication of the first-fruits of our life to his service. How pleased was the Redeemer with the hosannas of the children, and how deeply was he interested in the case of that hopeful youth who came to inquire of him the way to life! And does not the parable of the prodigal son teach us how welcome is the return of the young to the Father of Mercies? God chose David, the youngest son of the family; and set his love upon Jacob, while he passed by Esau the elder. Amongst all the disciples, John was the most beloved, and he was at the same time the youngest.

But still the principal design of this chapter is to set forth the advantages attendant on the possession of early piety.

1. Of these some relate to others. This will cause you to be a source of ineffable delight to your parents;*

* In the memoirs of that truly apostolic missionary, the Rev. Henry Martyn, occurs the following anecdote, which most forcibly illustrates the subject of the influence of filial conduct upon parental and domestic comfort and respectability:

"Read the eleventh chapter of John to a poor man, in whose room at the workhouse I was struck with the misery that presented itself. He was lying with his clothes and hat on, upon the bed, dying. His wife was cleaning the room, as if nothing was the matter; and upon the threshold was the daughter, about thirty years old, who had been delirious thirteen years." What a scene of wretchedness! What a miserable group! It is a picture from which the mind turns with the deepest emotions of distressful pity. But, oh! the cause of this misery! "The dying man," continued Mr Martyn, "was once a respectable innkeeper in the town; but the extravagance of a son brought him to poverty, and his daughter who foresaw it to

and probably render you a blessing to your brothers and sisters. Piety in youth will render you a benefactor to your species, and a blessing to society. Instead of seducing others by a bad example, you will benefit them by the influence of a good one; instead of poisoning others by corrupt principles, you will scatter along your path the seeds of truth piety and morality; instead of drawing down the vengeance of God upon society by your crimes, you will bring down his blessing by your prayers. You will be a patriot of the most elevated and successful nature; and by your good conduct, and the support of all religious institutions, do more, in connexion with others of a similar disposition, for the good of your country, than fleets and armies can achieve.

2. Innumerable advantages will result to yourself from early piety. It will exert a friendly influence over your temporal interests. It will open springs of consolation all along your path through the vale of tears, whose waters, adapted to every condition, will never fail. Religion, chosen in youth as your guide, companion, and friend, will attend you through all the journey of life; will go with you where you go, and dwell with you wherever you dwell: she will accompany you when with many tears you quit the paternal roof, and you go forth,

insanity." What must have been the feelings (except indeed vice had turned his heart to stone) of the guilty author of this complicated misery, when he saw the consuming grief of his broken-hearted father, and heard the wild ramblings of his maniac sister, whilst conscience thundered in his ear, "Thou art the cause of this dreadful calamity!" How many broken hearts and insane minds, has similar conduct produced? How many are at this moment bending to the grave, or shut up in the cells of a lunatic asylum, who but for profligate children might have been living in health, sanity, and respectability.

a young adventurer, into the world. She will travel with you in the wilderness, or sail with you on the ocean; she will abide with you in a mansion, or inhabit with you the cottage: when every other friend forsakes you, she will cling to you the closer, smile, when every other face is covered with a frown, and put forth all her energies to comfort you in the time of your humbled fortunes; in seasons of perplexity she will guide you to the fountain of light; when oppressed with care, will place you on the rock of ages; in the storms of affliction will cast forth for you the anchor of hope; and in times of dreary desolation, will enable you by faith, to see the land which is afar off, the land of promise and of rest.

Early piety is a distinguished honour. If there be true honour in the universe, it is to be found in religion. Even the heathens were sensible of this; hence in Rome the temple of honour was entered through that of virtue, to teach that virtue is the way to honour. Religion is the image of God in the soul of man. Can glory itself rise higher than this? What a distinction to have this lustre put upon the character in youth! It was mentioned by Paul as a singular honour to the believing Jews that they first trusted in Christ; and in referring to Andronicus and Junia he mentions it to their praise that they were in Christ before him. To be a child of God, an heir of glory, a disciple of Christ, a warrior of the cross, a citizen of the New Jerusalem, from our youth up, adorns the brow with amaranthine wreaths of fame. A person converted in youth, is like the sun rising on a summer's morning to shine through a long bright day; but a person converted late in life, is like the evening star, a lovely object of Christian contempla-

tion, but not appearing till the day is closing, and then seen but for a little while.

Early piety will be of immense importance to you in the various relations of life in which you may stand. If you are parents, it will dispose and enable you to train up your children and servants in the fear of God. It will prevent you from neglecting the immortal interests of those who are committed to your care. How many parents are accessary to the murder of their children's souls; blood-guiltiness rests upon their conscience, and the execrations of their own offspring will be upon them through eternity. In those cases where persons are regenerated late in life, what anguish is sometimes felt on seeing their children wandering in the broad road that leads to destruction; and on remembering that they were the means of leading them astray. "Oh, my children! my children!" they exclaim, "would God I had known religion earlier for your sakes. Why did I not seek the Lord in youth? Then I should have trained you up in the fear of God, and have been spared the agony of seeing you walking in the path of destruction; or at least, have been spared the torturing reflection, that it was through my neglect you despised religion."

Early piety will be a guard to you against the temptations to which we are all exposed in this life. Temptations to sin, like the wind, come from every quarter. In company, in solitude; at home, abroad; in God's house, and in our own; we are always open to attack. Business, pleasure, companions, all may become a snare. We never know when, or from what, or in what way to expect the assault. At one time we may be tempted to infidelity, at another to immorality; now to licentious-

ness, then to intemperance. Piety is the only effectual guard of our character. Luther tells us of a young believer who used to repel all temptations with this exclamation, "Begone, I am a Christian." My children, adopt the same character, and maintain it with the same constancy and success. When Pyrrhus tempted Fabricius, the first day with an elephant, and the next with promises of honour, the Roman nobly replied, "I fear not thy force, I am too wise for thy fraud." Religion will enable you to say the same to every one who threatens or allures. Neglect piety in youth, and who shall say how low in the scale of vice and infamy you may be found in after life? Omit to take with you this shield, and your moral character may be destroyed, or receive a wound, the scar of which you may carry to the grave.

Early piety will leave you fewer sins to bewail in life. Amongst other things which the illustrious Beza gave thanks for to God in his testament, was that he became a Christian at sixteen, by which he was prevented from the commission of many sins, which would otherwise have overtaken him, and rendered his life less happy. Every year's impenitence must cause many years' repentance. If you neglect religion in youth, God may give you up to the delusions of infidelity, or to the practices of immorality; and during that unhappy season, of what remediless mischief may you be the occasion, how many companions may you lead astray by your crimes who, if you are afterwards reclaimed by grace, are sure not to be so easily led back by your virtues. Instances have occurred in which young men during the days of their irreligion have perpetrated the horrid crime of corrupting female virtue, and then aban-

doned the hapless victim of their passion. Cast off as a guilty worthless thing, the injured partner of his sins has added iniquity to iniquity, and she who, but for her betrayer, might have lived a long and virtuous life, has sunk amidst disease, and want, and infamy, to an early and dishonoured grave. God, in the mysteries of his grace, has, in after years, given repentance to the greater criminal of the two. But can he forget his crime? Oh no. God has forgiven him, but never, never can he forgive himself. Not even the blood which has washed away the guilt from his conscience can efface the history of it from the page of memory; nor floods of tears deaden the impression which it has left upon the heart. He cannot restore the virtue he destroyed, nor refund the peace which with felon hand he stole from a bosom tranquil till it knew him; he cannot build up the character he demolished; much less can he rekindle the life which he extinguished, or call back from the regions of the damned the miserable ghost which he hurried to perdition. Ah! that ghost now haunts his imagination, and as she exhibits the mingled agony, fury, revenge, and despair of a lost soul, seems to say, "Look at me, my destroyer!" For a while he can see nothing but her flames, and hear nothing but her groans. Early piety would have saved him from all this. Late piety brings him salvation for another world, but it comes not soon enough to save him from remorse in this.

Early piety will procure for you, if you live so long, the honour of an aged disciple. A person converted late in life is a young disciple, though a grey-headed man. An aged hero, who has spent his days contending for the liberties of his country; or a philosopher, who has long employed himself in improving its science; or

a philanthropist, who has become old in relieving its wants, are venerable sights, but far inferior, if they are destitute of religion, to the aged Christian who has employed half a century in glorifying God, as well as doing good to man. An old disciple is honoured in the church, and respected even in the world. His hoary head is lifted like a crown of glory among other and younger disciples, over whom his decaying form throws its venerated shade. How rich is he in experience of all the ways of godliness! Like a decrepit warrior, he can talk of conflicts and of victories. Younger Christians gather round him to learn wisdom from his lips, and courage from his feats, and to show him tokens of respect. By his brethren in Christ he is regarded with veneration; his presence is always marked with every demonstration of respect, and his opinion is listened to with the profoundest deference. He is consulted in emergencies, and the fruits of his experience are gathered with eagerness. His virtues have been tried by time, the surest test of excellence, and they have passed the ordeal with honour. The suspicion and scepticism as to the reality of religion in general and the sincerity of any of its professors, which innumerable moral failures have produced in some minds, vanish in the presence of such a man; and even the infidel and profane bear a testimony to his worth, which his long-tried consistency has extorted. "There, at least," say they, "is one good man, whose sincerity has been tried by the fluctuating circumstances and varying situations of half a century. His is no mushroom piety, which springs up in a night, and perishes in a day. The suns of many summers, and the storms of many winters, have passed over it; and both adversity and prosperity have assailed and demonstrated

its stability. We begin after all from that very character to believe that there is more in religion than we have been apt to imagine."

Early piety if persisted in prepares for a comfortable old age. The condition of a wicked old man without piety is wretched indeed. He presents to the eye of Christian contemplation a melancholy spectacle. As to all the grand purposes of existence he has passed through the world in vain. Life to him has been a lost adventure. Seventy years he has sojourned in the region of mercy, and is going out of it without salvation. Seventy years he has dwelt within reach of redemption, and yet is going to the lost souls in prison. If he is insensible to his case, he is going to ruin asleep; but if a little awakened, how bitter are his reflections. If he looks back upon the past, he sees nothing but a wide and dreary waste, where the eye is relieved by no monuments of piety, but is scared by memorials of a life of sin; if he looks at his present circumstances, he sees nothing but a mere wreck of himself, driving upon the rock of his destiny and destruction; but the future! oh! how can he look on that, which presents to him death, for which he is not prepared; judgment, from which he can expect nothing but condemnation; heaven, which he has bartered for pleasure the remembrance of which is now painful or insipid; hell, which with its eternity of torments he has merited by his iniquities. The ghosts of spent years and departed joys flit before him, and point to those regions of woe whither sinful delights conduct the sensualist and voluptuary. Miserable old man! And he has nothing to cheer his cold and dreary spirit; the winter of life is upon him without any spring to look forward to; the night of existence

has come on, and not a star twinkles from heaven upon his path, nor will any morning dawn upon the gloom which enwraps him. Such is the old age of those who remember not God in their youth, live a life of sin, and carry on the oblivion of religion and practice of iniquity to the end of life.

But should any one be called at the eleventh hour, such a convert is subject, at times, to the most painful doubts and apprehensions; he questions the reality of his religion; he fears that it is the result of circumstances, not of a divine change; he is afraid that, like a half-shipwrecked vessel driven into port by the violence of the storm rather than by the efforts of the crew, he has been forced to religion more by the terrors produced by approaching death, than by the choice of his own will; he often concludes that he never forsook the world till he could no longer refuse it; and that he renounced the enjoyments of earth only because, from the decay of his body, from the feebleness of his mind, and the weakness of his fancy, he was unable to indulge in them. These, and similar fears, generally occasion in persons converted in old age a painful hesitancy concerning the security of their state, prevent them from going on their way rejoicing, and hang like a cloud upon the prospect of immortality.

How much more cheering and consolatory are the reflections of the aged Christian who remembered his Creator in the days of his youth! He too has arrived at the wintry days of existence, but, like the inhabitant of a well-stored mansion, he has a thousand comforts which enable him to hear the howling of the tempest without a fear, and to look on the dreariness of the scene unconscious of a want; and in addition to this,

the days of everlasting spring approach for him. He too is overtaken by the evening; his shadow lengthens on the plain, but the heavens pour upon him the glory of God, while the word in which he trusted is a lamp unto his feet; and an eternal day is about to dawn upon his soul. In the past he sees the long interval between the season of youth, and the furrowed countenance of age, filled up, in some good degree, with works of devotion, righteousness, and benevolence, whereby he has glorified God, benefited his species, and prepared a balm for his memory. No sins of youth fill his bones with pain, nor his spirit with remorse. He has little doubt of his sincerity; for his life, though it affords him no ground of dependence for salvation, furnishes him with numerous evidences of the faith which justifies the soul, and purifies the heart. He forsook the world when most capable of enjoying it; he was not driven by violence to religion, but deliberately weighed anchor, and, with every sail set, steered for the haven of piety. He has resisted innumerable attacks upon his principles, and against every foe has held fast his integrity. On the verge of life he can say, "I have kept the faith, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which God the righteous Judge will bestow upon me."

Surely, surely, my children, an old age thus placid and venerable, is an object worthy of your desires; surely these peaceful recollections, these sublime prospects, amidst the dreariness of age, are deserving your exertions!

Early piety will have a considerable influence on your eternal felicity. In dwelling upon the two different and contrary states of heaven and hell, we are not to con-

ceive of them as conditions of being where all persons in the former will be equally happy, and all in the latter equally miserable. There are different degrees of glory in one, and different degrees of torment in the other. This is proved by Scripture, and accords with reason. Grace is glory in the bud; glory is grace in a state of fructification; and as in the natural world, so it is in the spiritual world; where there is little blossom there cannot be much fruit. Life is the seed-time for eternity; what a man sows that shall he also reap, not only in kind, but in degree. Late sowings, as well as scanty ones, are generally followed by short crops. The reward of the righteous is all of grace, but then that grace which rewards the righteous rather than the wicked, may, with equal consistency, reward righteousness according to its degrees. We cannot think that the reward of the dying thief, who was converted in the dark valley of the shadow of death, will be equal to that of Timothy or of Paul, who spent a long and laborious life in the service of Christ. Nor is it to be imagined that the crown of the aged convert will be as bright or as heavy as that of the Christian who is converted in youth, and continues, till a good old age, in a course of consistent piety.

But there is one consideration which should come home to the bosom of young people with overwhelming force; I mean, that unless they become partakers of piety in early life, the probability is that they will never partake of it at all. Is it of consequence that you should become pious at any time? Then does all that consequence attach to the present time. Let me sound this idea again and again in your ears, let me detain your attention upon the awful and alarming

sentiment. The probability of your salvation becomes weaker and weaker as the years of youth roll by. It is less probable this year than the last, and will be less probable next year than this. I do not now argue upon the uncertainty of life, that I have considered before, I appeal to facts, which in reference to the sentiment I have now advanced are of the most alarming aspect. Consider, only two individuals of the six hundred thousand who left Egypt above the age of twenty years entered Canaan. Of those who are converted at all by far the greater part are brought to seek religion in their youth; and of the few who are reclaimed in adult, or old age, how rare a case is it to find one who has been religiously educated. It is easy to observe, generally speaking, that sinners, who have been brought under the means of grace, or under some new and impressive preaching, which they never enjoyed before, if they do not soon profit by their privileges rarely profit by them at all. God's time of conversion seems to be the morning of religious privilege. The churches mentioned in the New Testament were chiefly made up of persons converted by the first efforts of the apostles. Hence, when these servants of the cross were unsuccessful in their early labours in a city or province, they looked upon it as a bad omen, and a strong indication that it would be useless to continue their ministrations there; so that the usual order of divine grace is for its showers to fall on what might be called morning sowings. The years of youth or of first hearing the gospel, are the usual times of conversion; and those who misimprove either of these are in general found to neglect religion for ever after. I am aware that instances to the contrary are sometimes found; and

therefore none who are inclined to seek God at any age should despair: yet they but rarely occur, and therefore let none presume. True repentance is never too late; but late repentance is seldom true.

It is very probable that some who may read these pages deliberately and sincerely make up their minds to serve God at some future time, after they have a little longer enjoyed the world. Mistaken youths! Sinful young people! Let them consider what their intention amounts to; "I will go on sinning a little longer, and then I will repent. I will serve Satan, and the world, and sin, as long as I can, and when I am worn out in their service, or weary of it, I will turn to God, and try the ways of religion. O Lord! the Preserver of my days, spare my life a little longer to disobey thee, to insult thee, and then give me thy grace to assist me to turn from my wicked ways and live." What wickedness! What shocking impiety! What daring madness! Do they not tremble? Are they not terrified at this view of their own conduct? Can they live another day in this state of mind? Can they give their eyes to sleep with such a purpose in their bosom? Let them consider how just it is that God should reserve the dregs of his wrath for those, who reserve only the dregs of their time for him.

Now is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." You know not what another day, hour, moment, may bring forth. Opportunity, mercy, salvation, heaven, eternal glory, are all upon the wing of the present hour; condemnation, hell, eternal torment, and despair, may all be in the train of the next. That door of grace which is open to-day may be shut to-morrow;

that sceptre of mercy which is stretched out to-day may be withdrawn to-morrow. Oh, the noble purposes that have withered, the sublime prospects that have failed, the millions of immortal souls that have perished, by putting off the present season, for a more convenient time! "Soul opportunities," says an old author, "are more worth than a thousand worlds." And they are rapidly sliding by with the days of your youth.

PRAYER.

Great and glorious God, former of my body and soul, I will praise thee for thy goodness to me in my creation. I am fearfully and wonderfully made, with a body complete in all its parts, and not monstrous and defective in any. I bless thee for the use of all my senses and all my limbs. I thank thee for all the faculties of my soul, so that I am not a cripple, idiot, lunatic, or a maniac. I bless thee for all the advantages of my birth; that my lot is cast in this happy land of civil and religious liberty, of Christianity, and Protestantism. I thank thee for the benefits of a good education, and the prospect, if I am industrious, sober, and careful, of providing for my comfortable and respectable support in this world. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! And now, O most merciful God, aid me by thy grace, that I may add to these mercies, so numerous and so various, the still richer advantages of early piety, enumerated in this chapter. Make me duly sensible of their reality and their value. May I be anxious to comfort my dear parents by my early piety. Let me be their delight, and the joy of all my Christian friends. By early religion may I be helped to spend a holy, useful, and happy life. May I be enabled to get good, and do good, all my days. May I leave the world better than I found it. If my days are to be many on earth, may I attain to the honour and respect of an aged disciple, and my hoary hairs be a crown of glory. But if I die young, may I have accomplished the end of life, by having secured the one thing needful. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON THE TEMPORAL INTERESTS OF ITS POSSESSORS.

Godliness has the promise of the life that is to come, it conducts to glory, honour, immortality; this is its chief commendation. Revelation has drawn aside the veil which hangs over the unseen state, and urged the great business of religion upon you, my children, by a contemplation of the dark world of hell, and of the splendours of the celestial city. It might seem that, after such an appeal, every other were useless, and that to speak of other advantages than eternal life, were only adding a drop to the ocean, a taper to the sun: but there are persons who are wrought upon more by present good, however small, than any future prospect of the greatest gain; who are more governed by illustrations borrowed from things seen and temporal than by those which are derived from things unseen and eternal. In this respect also, and on this ground, religion can plead its advantages, for it has "the promises of the life that now is," as well as that which is to come. I do not assert, that religion will conduct all its followers to wealth, honour, and health. No. Still,

however, it exerts a friendly influence on all the temporal interests of mankind, and protects them from many evils to which without it they are exposed.

1. It exercises and improves the understanding. From beginning to end religion is an intellectual process. Whatever raises man above the dominion of the senses, and renders him independent of them, as sources of gratification, must have a salutary influence upon the mind. Now the objects which religion exhibits are such as the mental faculties alone can converse with; and the moment a man begins to feel solicitude about spiritual things, he begins to experience a considerable elevation of character. The subjects of divine truth are of the most sublime and lofty kind. They form the Alps in the world of mind. The existence and attributes of the great God; the system of Providence, embracing all worlds and all ages; the scheme of redemption, planned from eternity for the salvation of millions of rational creatures; the immortality of the soul; the solemnities of judgment; the everlasting states of the righteous and the wicked; these are the every-day topics of thought with a Christian. Can a man live in the daily contemplation of these vast ideas, and not feel an elevating influence upon his understanding? It will probably be said, that science will have the same effect. This is admitted in part. But how many are there to whom philosophical pursuits are utterly inaccessible! And besides this, it may be replied that nothing but religion will infallibly guard the soul from being debased by vicious indulgences.

Read the missionary records, and learn by those interesting details, what religion has done for the negroes

of the West Indies, the Hottentots of South Africa, the Esquimaux of Labrador, the fur-clad Greenlanders of the arctic regions, and the voluptuous cannibals of the South Sea Islands. It has raised them from savages to rational creatures; awakened their dormant understanding, sharpened their powers of perception; taught them the art of reasoning; and invested them with the power of eloquence.

But why do I go to distant countries, while our own furnishes illustrations so numerous and so striking? How many persons are there, educated in our Sunday-schools, and now filling stations of importance, credit, and usefulness, who, but for religion, would never have risen in the scale of society, or ascended above the lowest level of poverty. Education, it is true, gave the first impulse to their minds; but it was an impulse which would have soon spent its force, had it not been continued and increased by religion. It was this that gave the sober, serious, and reflective turn of mind which led to such mental improvement; and those who, but for the power of godliness, would have been still earning their bread at the plough or the anvil, are at the head of their branches of trade, or are raised to the distinction of preaching with ability and success, the truths of salvation.*

* As a proof of the influence which religion has in strengthening and elevating the powers of even the most cultivated understanding, I may give the following quotation from the life of the Rev. Henry Martyn.

"Since I have known God in a saving manner," he remarks, "painting, poetry, and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made it susceptible of impressions from the

2. Religion guards the health. I do not mean to say that the rose will always bloom upon the countenance of piety, but I will affirm, that where it already displays its beauty, and sheds its fragrance, religion will prevent the vices, which, like worms at the root of a flower, consume its strength, and shorten its existence. How many diseases are generated by sin! It is calculated that even in a time of war, there are more who perish by drunkenness and licentiousness, than by the sword.

"Ye victims of voluptuousness, ye martyrs of concupiscence, who formerly tasted the pleasures of sin for a season, but now are beginning to feel the horrors of it for ever; you serve us for demonstration and example. Look at those trembling hands, that shaking head, those disjointed knees, that faltering resolution, that feeble memory, that worn-out body, all putrefaction; these are the dreadful rewards which vice bestows now, as pledges of what Satan will bestow presently, on those on whom he is preparing to exhaust his fury."

Religion will prevent all this; that passion which wastes the strength as with a fever; that ambition which wears out the frame faster than hard labour; that malice which robs of sleep; that gambling which hurries a man backward and forward between the delirium of hope and the torture of fear; that gluttony which brings on apoplexy; that drunkenness which preys as a slow fire on the organs of life; that de-

sublime and beautiful. O how religion secures the heightened enjoyment of those pleasures which keep so many from God, by their becoming a source of pride!"

And it may be fairly argued, that the sublimity of Milton's genius was owing, in no small degree, to the influence of religion upon his mind. This is at once far more direct in its tendency than any natural scenery, however bold and striking may be its features; since piety not only brings the mind into the region of sublime mental scenery, but fixes the eye most intently upon it.

bauchery which corrupts the whole blood, and brings on the infirmities of age in the days of youth, are all kept off by religion. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; it is a fountain of life to guard us from the snares of death." But of the drunkard and the fornicator it may be said, "his bones are full of the sins of his youth, which lie down with him in the dust. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth; though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him."

3. Religion builds up and protects the reputation. It prevents those sins which render a man dishonourable and infamous; it promotes all those virtues which raise and cherish esteem. How much is the liar, the extortionate and imposing tradesman, the unfaithful servant, the unkind husband, the cruel oppressive master, despised! Who respects the individual that is notoriously addicted to vice, and flagrantly neglectful of the lowest obligations of virtue? Whereas, a man of consistent piety, who is known to be a real Christian, and whose Christianity renders him scrupulously true, honest, and upright, is always universally esteemed. The wicked may laugh at a saint, but is he not the very man with whom they love to trade; in whose character they find sufficient vouchers for the propriety of his conduct; and in whose fidelity they can repose unbounded confidence? This was remarkably exemplified in the instance of the missionary Schwartz, who laboured to spread the gospel in the southern parts of the Indian peninsula. Such was the repute in which this holy man was held by the native princes of Hindostan, that when Tippoo Saib was about to enter into a treaty with the Company, not being dis-

posed to place much confidence in their agents, he exclaimed, "Send to me the missionary Schartwz, I will treat with him, for I can confide in his veracity."

How many persons has the want of religion brought to an untimely end! No man would ever have been exiled as a felon, or executed as a malefactor, if he had lived under the influence of piety. No jail would have been needed, no gallows erected, if all men were pious. Godliness may not, indeed, guard us from poverty, but it will certainly save us from infamy. It may not advance us to wealth, but it will assuredly raise us to respectability.

4. Religion promotes our secular interests. I do not pretend that piety bears into the church the cornucopia of worldly wealth, to pour down showers of gold on all who court her smiles and bend to her sway; but still there is a striking tendency in her influence, to improve our worldly circumstances. It certainly prevents those vices which tend to poverty. Penury is often the effect of vice. How many have hurled themselves and their families from the pinnacles of prosperity to the depths of adversity, by a course of wicked and profligate extravagance! Multitudes have spent all their substance, like the prodigal son, upon harlots and riotous living. Pride has ruined thousands, and indolence its tens of thousands. It is an observation of Franklin, "that one vice costs more to keep than two children." Religion is the most economical, and sin the most expensive thing in the world. How much do the drunkard, debauchee, sabbath-breaker, and frequenter of theatres, pay for their sinful gratifications! What is spent in this kingdom every year in the grosser sensual indulgences, would

pay the interest of the national debt. Piety would save all this to the nation.

And then it not only prevents the vices which tend to poverty, but enjoins and cherishes the virtues which lead to prosperity. It makes a man industrious; and is not this the way to wealth? It renders him sober; and does not sobriety tend to advance our fortune? It enforces a right improvement of time, and surely this is advantageous to every one. It prescribes frugality, which tends to accumulate. If a young man is in the service of another, piety, by causing him to speak the truth, and adhere to the principles of honesty, renders him trustworthy and confidential. We have a most striking and instructive instance of this in the history of Joseph, of whom the historian thus writes: "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had, he put into his hand. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat." This is one of the most lovely and convincing cases on record of the influence of religion on our temporal interests. It was his piety that secured to Joseph this elevation and prosperity: it was religion that exalted him from a menial slave to a steward. Innumerable are the cases in which persons who set out on the journey of life without property, and without patronage, have, by dint of those virtues which religion enjoins,

risen to respectability and affluence. They were probably first in a state of servitude, where by their steadiness and good conduct they so attached themselves to their employers as to become in their estimation almost essential to the future success of their business; and the result has been a share, and, in some cases, the whole of the trade, which they had contributed so materially to establish.

A friend of mine was once walking in the neighbourhood of a large manufacturing town on a very cold winter's morning, when he overtook a plain man, decently clad, and wrapped in a comfortable great coat. After the usual salutations, my friend said to the stranger, "I am glad to see you with such a good warm covering this cold morning." "It was not always thus," the man replied. "I was once a poor miserable creature, and had neither good clothes nor good victuals; now I have both, and a hundred pounds in the bank." "What produced this favourable change?" continued my friend. "Religion, sir; I am a good workman, and, as is too commonly the case with such men, spent half my time, and all my wages nearly, at the public-house. I was of course always poor and always wretched. By God's direction I was led to hear the Methodists, when by divine grace the Word reached my heart. I repented of my sins, and became a new creature in Christ Jesus: old things passed away, and all things became new. Religion made me industrious and sober, nothing now went for sin; and the result is, that I am comfortable and comparatively rich." This is a proof and an illustration, that godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. Nor are these proofs

uncommon. Many persons, now living in circumstances of high respectability, are willing to ascribe all they possess here, as well as all they hope for hereafter, to the influence of religion.

All this is seen in the case of individuals; on consideration of the world at large, it will appear still more strikingly. What but religion can raise men from a savage to a civilized state? What else could have achieved the wonders which have been wrought in Africa, in Otaheite; and taught the rudest barbarians to till the ground, to learn trades, to clothe themselves in decent apparel, to read, to cast accounts, to print books, to frame laws? Godliness alone can expel from society the practice of cruelty, and introduce the reign and prevalence of mercy. The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Rome and Greece in the zenith of their glory, had neither a hospital for the sick, nor an asylum for the poor; they treated their enemies with the most insolent cruelty; practised the most rigorous slavery; instituted games in which myriads of human beings were torn to pieces in fighting with wild beasts. What a blessing has Christianity been to the world, even in relation to its present comforts! It has suppressed polygamy, put a stop to the sale of children by their parents, and the abandonment and murder of aged parents by their children; it has rescued women from their abominable degradation by the other sex, and raised them to their just rank in society; it has sanctified the bond of marriage, checked the licentiousness of divorce; it has in some measure destroyed slavery, mitigated the terrors of war, given a new sanction to treaties, introduced milder laws, and more equitable governments; it has taught lenity

to enemies and hospitality to strangers; it has made a legal provision for the poor; formed institutions for instructing the ignorant; purified the stream of justice; erected the throne of mercy. "These, O Jesus, are the triumphs and the trophies of thy gospel; and which of thine enemies, Paganism, Islamism, or Infidelity, has done, or could do, the like?"

Even the avowed and inveterate opponents of the gospel, have been reluctantly compelled to acknowledge, in this view, its excellence. Voltaire says expressly,

"That religion is necessary in every community; the laws are a curb upon open crimes, and religion on those that are private." "No religion," says Bolingbroke, "ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, as the Christian. The gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, benevolence, and universal charity. Supposing Christianity to be a human invention it is the most amiable and useful invention that ever was imposed upon mankind for their good." Hume acknowledges, "that disbelief in futurity, looses in a great measure the ties of morality, and may be supposed, for that reason, pernicious to the peace of civil society." Rousseau confesses, "that if all were perfect Christians, individuals would do their duty, the people would be obedient to the laws, the chiefs just, the magistrates incorrupt, the soldiers would despise death, and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state." Gibbon admits, "that the gospel discouraged suicide, advanced erudition, checked oppression, promoted the manumission of slaves, and softened the ferocity of barbarous nations: that fierce nations received at the same time lessons of faith and humanity, and that even in the most corrupt state of Christianity, the barbarians learnt justice from the law, and mercy from the gospel."

And yet with such concessions, and after having paid such a tribute of praise to the excellence of Christianity, these wicked men have been so vile and perverse as to conspire for her destruction.

Thus has it been most demonstrably proved, that godliness exerts a powerful and favourable influence

over the temporal interests of mankind. Neglect it, my children, and you know not what awaits you, either in this world or in that which is to come. You may imagine that, provided you are moral and steady, although you are not pious, you are far enough removed from the probability of that wretchedness which vice brings with it. But, ah! in some unguarded moment, temptation may be successful to lead you astray: one vice makes way for another; and the dreadful progress described in the chapter on the deceitfulness of the heart, may be realized by you. Neglect religion, and you will certainly be ruined for the world to come, and may be so for the life that now is. Vice always brings hell in its train, and oftentimes a dreadful earnest of its future torments, in present poverty, disease, and misery.

I reflect with unutterable grief, as I now write, upon many young men, who were entering life with the greatest advantages, and the brightest prospects, whom, to use a common expression, fortune favoured with her sweetest smiles; but alas! they would not be happy and respectable, for taking to the ways of sin, they dashed all the hopes of their friends, and wantonly threw away the opportunities which a kind providence had put within their reach. They went first to the theatre, then to the brothel, then to the tavern. They became dissipated, extravagant, idle. Unhappy youths! I know what they might have been; respectable tradesmen, prosperous merchants, honourable members of society: I know what they are; bloated rakes, discarded partners, uncertified bankrupts, miserable vagrants, a burden to their friends, a nuisance to the community, and a torment to themselves.

Seek religion, then; for, as Soloman says in a

passage quoted in a former chapter, "She is more precious than rubies: and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her."

PRAYER.

Gracious God, I bless thee for thy great goodness in fitting up this world with so many conveniences and comforts for man's temporary sojourn in it, so that even our discipline and probation for eternity and heaven are carried on amidst many sources of enjoyment for earth and time. Suffer me neither to undervalue nor overvalue thy gifts of Providence. Let me neither despise nor idolize wealth, reputation, or knowledge: yet may I make them all secondary and subordinate to the spiritual blessings which are in Christ Jesus; seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, I humbly ask for such a measure of them as may promote my personal comfort and my usefulness. If thou wilt give me faith to overcome the world, and a disposition to employ wealth for thy glory and the good of my fellow-creatures, bless my industry, and let me obtain success in whatever way I may lawfully employ my time and talents in trade. Thou teachest discretion to man, do thou therefore help me to be diligent, skilful, and persevering in all my secular concerns, first as an apprentice, [or servant,] and afterwards as a master. Give me thy grace, that I may ever follow whatsoever things are true, pure, honest, just, lovely, and of good report. O grant unto me that sincere and practical piety which shall keep away from me all the vices that would hinder prosperity, and implant in me all the virtues that most promote it: and whatever of this I shall obtain, assist me to own thy hand in all and consecrate all to thy glory. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHOICE OF COMPANIONS.

Man was made for society, and society is thought to be essential to his happiness. Adam did but half enjoy the lovely and untainted scenes of Eden while there was no rational companion to whom he could impart the raptures of his soul, and Paradise was incomplete till God gave him a friend. How much more may it be expected, that now, when the human bosom is bereft of its innocence, man should look out of himself for happiness, and endeavour to find it in society. Young people, especially, are anxious to form associations of this kind, and are in imminent danger of choosing companions who will do them no good. The design of the present chapter is to put you, my children, on your guard against this evil, and to assist you in the selection of the friends with whom you take daily counsel. This subject has been already adverted to, but it is of sufficient importance to occupy a separate chapter.

1. It becomes you very seriously to reflect on the influence which your companions, of whatever kind they are, will certainly have in the formation of your character. "We are all," says Mr Locke, "a kind of chameleons, that take a tincture from the objects which

surround us." A still wiser man has told us, that "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Hence he says to us; "make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." These admonitions are founded on the general principle, that the example of our companions will exert a plastic influence in the formation of our character, slow and silent perhaps, but irresistible and successful: and this influence will be in proportion to the love and esteem we cherish for them. All nations and all ages have confessed the truth of this sentiment. The example of a beloved companion is all but omnipotent, more especially if he be a sinful one, because a bad model finds in the depravity of our nature, something that prepares it to receive the impression. One evil companion will undo in a month all that parents and teachers have been labouring for years to accomplish. Here then pause, and consider that the character of your associates will, in all probability, be your own. If you do not carry to them a similarity of taste, you will be sure to acquire it; "for how can two walk together except they be agreed?"

2. Let me now set before you the dangers to be apprehended from bad company. By bad company I mean all those who are destitute of the fear of God; not only the infidel, the profligate, the profane, but those who are living in the visible neglect of religion. These are no fit companions for you. They may be respectable and genteel as to their rank in life; they may be graceful and insinuating in their manners; they may be persons of fine taste, and cultivated understanding; of facetious humour and polished wit; but these

things, if connected with irreligious habits, only make them the more alarmingly and successfully dangerous; they are like the fair speech, lovely form, and glowing colours, which the serpent assumed when he attacked and destroyed the innocence of Eve. Look through these meretricious ornaments, pierce this dazzling exterior, and recognise the fang and the venom of the wily foe. The more external accomplishments any one has, if he be without the fear of God, the greater is his power to do mischief; and remember, that when you have listened to his wiles, and feel the sharpness of his tooth, and the deadly agony of his venom, it will be no compensation nor consolation, that you have looked on his many-tinted skin, and have been ruined by the fascination of his charms. The companions you are to avoid then are those who are obviously living without the fear of God.

Consider the many dangers arising from such associates. You will soon outlive all sense of serious piety, and lose all the impressions you may have received from a religious education. These you cannot hope to preserve; you may as soon expect to guard an impression traced with your finger in the sand from being effaced by the tide of the Atlantic ocean. Even those whose religious character has been formed for years find it hard to preserve the spirituality of their mind in irreligious company. "Throw a blazing fire-brand into snow or rain," says Bolton, "and its brightness and heat will be quickly extinguished; so let the liveliest Christian plunge himself into sinful company, and he will soon find the warmth of his zeal abated, and the tenderness of his conscience injured." How then can you whose habits are scarcely formed, and whose character has

yet so much of the tenderness and suppleness of youth, expect to maintain a sense of religion? Do consider your proneness to imitation; your dread of singularity; your love of praise; your morbid sense of shame. Can you bear the sneer, the jest, the broad loud laugh? With none to defend you, none to join in your reverence for piety, what are you to do single and alone?

In such company you lay yourselves open to temptation, and will probably be drawn into a great deal of guilt. In private and alone, the force of temptation and the power of depravity are very great, but how much greater when aided by the example of intimate friends. As united fires burn the fiercer, and the concentrated virus of many persons thrown into the same room infected with the plague renders the disease more malignant; so a sinful community improves and grows in impiety, and every member joins his brother's pollution to his own. Nothing is so contagious as bad morals. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Multitudes have committed those sins without scruple in society, which they could not have contemplated alone without horror. It is difficult indeed to wade against the torrent of evil example, and, generally speaking, whatever is done by the party, must either be done or approved by every individual of which it is composed.

In such company you will throw yourselves out of the way of repentance and reformation. The little relish you once had for devotional exercises will soon be lost. Your Bible will fall into desuetude, the house of God will be neglected, and pious friends will be carefully shunned. Should an occasional revival of your serious feelings take place under a sermon, or the remonstrances of a friend, they will be immediately lulled

again to repose, or banished from your bosom by the presence and conversation of an irreligious companion.

In many cases, evil society has destroyed for ever even the temporal interests of those who have frequented it. Habits of dissipation, folly, and extravagance, have been acquired, character has been ruined, business neglected, poverty and misery entailed. But if this should not ensue, the influence of evil association will go far to ruin your souls and sink you to perdition. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed; their path is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Yes; if you connect yourselves with them, they will drag you into the vortex of their own ruin, as they sink into the gulf of perdition. Is there the companion on earth whose society you will seek or retain at this dreadful hazard? Is there one for the sake of whose friendship you would be willing to walk with him to the bottomless pit? What though you could have the society of the first poets, philosophers, wits, and fashionables of the age, and yet were to lose your own souls, what would this profit you? Will it soothe the agonies of your spirit in those regions of horrible despair, to remember what you enjoyed in the company of your gay companions on earth? Alas! alas! all that rendered your intercourse on earth delightful, will then have come to a final end. There will be no opportunities granted you to gratify your sensual desires together, no delicious food, no intoxicating liquors, there are no amusing tales, no merry songs there; no feast of reason, or flow of soul there; no coruscations of wit will enliven the gloom of hell; no gay fancy will brighten the darkness of eternal despair; no sallies of humour will illumine the darkness of everlasting night; "but there

shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth: the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched." What mind but His, who comprehends the universe in his survey, can count the multitudes that have been ruined for both worlds by the influence of bad company? Their names have been recorded on every roll of infamy, and found in every memorial of guilt and wretchedness. The records of the workhouse and the hospital; of the jail and the hulks; of the gallows and the dissecting room, would declare the mischief: and could we look into the prison of lost souls, a crowd of miserable ghosts would meet our eye, who seem to utter in groans of despair, this sad confession, "We are the wretched victims of evil association." In the large and populous town where Providence has fixed my lot, I have had an extensive sphere of observation; and I give it as my decided conviction and deliberate opinion, that improper associates are the most successful means which are employed by Satan for the ruin of men's souls.

The advice then which I offer is this:

1. Be not over anxious about society. Do not take up the opinion that all happiness centres in a friend. Many of you are blessed with a happy home and an agreeable circle round your own fire-side. Seek your companions then, in your parents, your brothers and sisters.

2. Determine to have no companion rather than have an improper one. The one case is but a privation of what is pleasant, the other is the possession of a positive evil.

3. Maintain a dignified, but not proud reserve. Do not be too frank and ingenuous. Be cautious of too

hastily attaching yourselves as friends to others, or them to you. Be polite and kind to all, but communicative and familiar with few. Keep your hearts in abeyance, till your judgment has most carefully examined the characters of those who wish to be admitted to the circle of your acquaintance. Neither run nor jump into friendships, but walk towards them slowly and cautiously.

4. Always consult your parents about your companions, and be guided by their opinions. They have your interest at heart, and see further than you can.

5. Cultivate a taste for reading and mental improvement; this will render you independent of living society. Books will always furnish you with intelligent, useful, and elegant friends. No one can be dull who has access to the works of illustrious authors, and has a taste for reading. And after all there are but comparatively few, whose society will so richly reward us as this silent converse with the mighty dead.

6. Choose none for your intimate companions but those who are decidedly pious, or persons of very high moral worth. A scrupulous regard to all the duties of morality, a high reverence for the scriptures, a belief in their essential doctrines, a constant attendance on the means of grace, are the lowest qualifications which you should require in the character of an intimate friend.

Perhaps I shall be asked one or two questions on this subject, to which an answer ought to be returned. "If," say you, "I have formed an acquaintance with a young friend, before I had any serious impressions upon my mind, ought I now to quit his society, if he still remains destitute of any visible regard to religion?" First try, by every effort which affection can dictate and prudence direct, to impress his mind with a sense

of religion: if, after a while, your exertions should be unavailing, candidly tell him, that as you have taken different views of things, and acquired different tastes to what you formerly possessed; and that as you have failed to bring him to your way of living, and can no longer accommodate your pursuits to his, conscience demands of you a separation from his society. Sir Matthew Hale, one of the most upright and able judges that ever sat upon the bench, was nearly ruined by his dissolute companions. When young, he had been very studious and sober; but the players happening to come to the town where he was studying, he became a witness of their performance, by which he was so captivated that his mind lost its relish for study, and he addicted himself to dissipated company. When in the midst of his associates one day, it pleased God to visit one of them with sudden death. Sir Matthew was struck with horror and remorse. He retired and prayed, first for his friend, that if the vital spark were not fled, he might be restored; and then for himself, that he might never more be found in such places and company as would render him unfit to meet death. From that day he quitted all his wicked companions, walked no more in the way of sinners, but devoted himself to piety and literature.

I shall be asked again probably, "What am I to do if I can find in my situation no individual of my own rank and circumstances in life, who is a partaker of true piety; ought I, in this case, to associate with those who are much below me, and who cannot be my companions in any thing but piety?" In reply to this, I observe, that it is character which constitutes respectability, and not the adventitious circumstances of fortune or rank:

and to conduct ourselves in any degree as if we were ashamed of the followers of Christ, because they are poor, is an offence against our divine Lord. To forsake prayer-meetings, benevolent institutions, Sunday schools, or places where the gospel is preached, merely because we find none there of sufficient fortune to associate with us; to treat our poorer brethren with cold neglect and haughty distance; to refuse to be seen speaking with them, and to them, as if they were beneath us; this is most manifestly wrong; for it is carrying the distinctions of the world into the church. Still, however, as religion was never intended to level these distinctions, it may not be advisable to choose bosom companions from those who are far below us in worldly circumstances. Some inconvenience would arise from the practice, and it would occasion, in many cases, the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of.

Young persons of good habits should take great heed that they do not, by insensible degrees, become dangerous characters to each other. That social turn of mind, which is natural to men, and especially to young persons, may perhaps lead them to form themselves into little societies, particularly at the festive season of the year, to spend their evenings together. But let me entreat you to be cautious how you spend them. If your games and your cups take up your time till you trench on the night, and perhaps on the morning too, you will quickly corrupt each other. Farewell then to prayer, and every other religious exercise in secret. Farewell then to all my pleasing hopes of you, and to those hopes which your pious parents have entertained. You will then become examples and instances of all the evils I have so largely described. Plead not that these

things are lawful in themselves; so are most of those in a certain degree which, by their abuse, prove destruction to men's souls and bodies. If you meet, let it be for rational and christian conversation; and let prayer and other devotions have their frequent place among you: and if you say or think that a mixture of these will spoil the company, it is high time for you to stop your career, and call yourselves to an account; for it seems by such a thought, that you are lovers of pleasure, much more than lovers of God. Some of these things may appear to have a tincture of severity, but consider whether I could have proved myself faithful to you, and to Him in whose name I speak, if I had omitted the caution I have now been giving you. I shall only add, that had I loved you less tenderly, I should have warned you more coldly of this dangerous and deadly snare.

PRAYER.

O God, in whom I live, and move, and have my being, thou hast taught me in thy Holy Word to acknowledge thee as the Author of my natural instincts and lawful propensities, and I now own thy workmanship in the desire which I feel after companionship. Thou hast formed me a social creature, and dost permit me to crave the fellowship of kindred minds. But as this propensity will be hurtful or beneficent to me according to the character of my companions, grant unto me thy Divine assistance, that I may firmly resolve never to choose or retain any one as a friend, whose character and conduct will hinder my own moral and religious behaviour. Inspire me with a fixed, firm, and irrevocable determination to avoid the society of all infidel, immoral, and irreligious companions. Oh, may I never walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, lest thou leave me to sit down in the seat of the

scornful. May I turn away from all who would keep or lead me away from thee. May no genius, wit, humour, elegance of manners, or powers of conversation, ever reconcile to me the friendship of those who make light of religion and walk not in its ways. May I determine to have no companions rather than bad ones, and to seek my happiness in converse with thee and with books. May I be able to say, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee. My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight." Direct me to some with whom I can safely take sweet counsel, and walk to the house of God in company. Oh, grant me my request, for my soul's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOOKS AND READING.

The invention of the art of printing forms an era in the literary history of the human race next in importance to that of alphabetic writing. Before this splendid gift was bestowed upon mankind, books, which till then were all in manuscript, were a treasure which few could possess. This invaluable art rendered the fountains of information accessible to the multitude, and has given them opportunity to slake their thirst for knowledge with its copious streams. In former times, ignorance was to many an unavoidable misfortune. They had neither books to read, nor ability to read them if they had. That time has gone by; and now ignorance is a fault and a disgrace. The art of printing has received so many mechanical improvements, science and the arts have so advanced, and education has become so widely diffused, that the productions of the press have multiplied incalculably beyond all former times. Knowledge is now supplied to the reading public, and especially to the youthful portions of it, in such elementary forms, and at such a cheap rate, that it is an indelible reproach to all young persons who do not improve their minds by an acquaintance with books.

Your first duty in reference to this matter, my children, is to obtain a thirst for knowledge. Look round upon this great universe, and upon all things in it, with an intense desire to know as much as you can of nature, men, and things. "Knowledge," says Bacon "is power," and if it were not power, it is pleasure. Every new idea is a new joy. As the eye is delighted with seeing, so is the mind with knowing. Let no day pass without knowing something you did not know the day before. Be ever growing richer in ideas. Be a miser after knowledge; though indeed the term miser, which signifies miserable, cannot in strict propriety of speech be applied to knowledge.

If you would acquire knowledge, you must read. Ideas, in one sense, may be said to grow in the mind; for one grain of thought, like a grain of wheat producing its kind, may be the seed of many other grains of thought. But then the seed-corn must be taken from the granary of knowledge in the library, and sowed, by reading, in the mind. Cultivate a taste for reading. Be fond of books. Make them your loved companions. Redeem time for reading, from unnecessary length of sleep, and from vain and frivolous occupations. How much knowledge may be gained by early rising. Have some useful book always at hand, that even the morsels and fragments of time may be carefully and vigilantly gathered up, and employed in its perusal. Get knowledge, even by little parcels and hasty snatches, as well as by more lengthened application.

Endeavour to acquire a memory retentive of what you read. All persons have not an equal power of recollection, but all may strengthen the power they have. Let this be a great point with you, for multitudes

forget almost all they read; while here and there a person is found who forgets nothing. It is of great consequence for young persons to set out in life with a purpose of systematic endeavour to remember what they read. And how may this be acquired.

By a determination of the will to do so. The power of the human will is wonderful. He who can bring himself to will to do any thing, that in reason is within the reach of his will, has half done it already. The power to will is often the power to do.

Acquire as much as possible of the power of abstraction and attention. By abstraction I mean excluding while reading all foreign and intrusive thoughts. Many persons habitually, and indeed at times all, read whole pages while thinking upon other subjects than that of the book before them. Of course in this case nothing is or can be remembered. And then, while abstraction means turning the mind away from other subjects than that under consideration, attention means concentrating our thoughts upon that one topic. If you want to gain an intimate acquaintance with an object of sight, and to remember what you have seen, you look away from surrounding objects, there is abstraction: and then, you look fixedly upon the one before you, there is attention. Now these two exercises of the intellect and will are the means of a retentive memory. And if you would be retentive readers, you must cultivate these two powers of abstraction and attention. It is melancholy to think how much some persons read, and how little they are the wiser for what they read; just because the ideas run out of their memory as fast as they run into it, like water from a vessel full of holes at the bottom.

Endeavour as you go on to understand what you

read. What is not understood cannot be remembered. And for this purpose, read in the earlier part of your life rather slowly. Often pause and say, "Do I understand this?" Read it again and again till you have caught the author's meaning.

Do not read too much at a time. You must not take up a book with no other purpose than to read it through, but to understand it. If you go to it merely to get to the end, and to think and say you have read it, and are often turning to the last page to see how many more there are yet to be perused; I can tell you such reading will do you no good. It is only a waste of time. Some books, indeed all of any considerable size, except in the department of poetry, fiction, and history, will require some patience to get profitably to the end. You can no more understand a book by galloping through it, than a traveller can know a country at the same speed of locomotion. In process of time, by practice, you may become both a rapid and a retentive reader.

Avoid that discursive and unstable state of mind, which soon grows weary of a book, and before it is half read lays it down for another. There are not a few who could hardly say with truth that they ever read a volume through.

Before you begin a book it is well to consider and think over its subject, and also to read the table of contents, not of course to be satisfied with such a summary acquaintance with it, but to prepare by a comprehensive idea of the whole to examine the details.

Read a few good books well, rather than a larger number carelessly. Be more ambitious for knowledge than the fame of it: to be acquainted with subjects rather than authors; and to read knowingly than largely.

Pause at the end of the volume, and ask, "What do I know, and how much do I remember of, its contents?" and in order to this do the same at the end of every chapter. If you would be a profitable reader take the trouble, in regard to an important volume, to epitomise it by writing a general abstract of its contents.

These few rules, my children, will help you, by reading, to acquire knowledge, and knowledge, as I have said, will be to you both power and pleasure. It will be a source of delight to your own minds, and give you influence, and thus help you to usefulness in society.

Before I come to point out the kind of knowledge you should seek, and the various classes of books you should read, I would utter a few thoughts on the kind of books you should not read. The press is a fountain of both blessings and curses to the world, and is continually sending forth sweet waters and bitter. Every age has had its bad books: and bad books are in some respects worse than bad companions. The misery and disgrace of the latter, brought upon them by their sins, are often the best counteragents of their vices. The consequences of their crimes, as seen in the state of their minds and the condition of their bodies, are warnings against the causes which produced them. But this applies not to a bad book, which, like insidious poison, works into the mind without any corrective at hand. Young people, in the first stages of their downward career, are often ashamed to be seen in bad company; but a bad book is a destructive companion in secret. Avoid then, all infidel productions. Wish not to know what can be said against the Bible. Many infidel cavils are very specious, and though in reality baseless, you may not be able to detect their fallacies and sophistries.

What is so palpably and plainly good, that a perverted ingenuity cannot raise some objections, or advance some plausible but sophistical arguments against it? Turn away from all profane works, which, though they may not argue against religion, turn it into ridicule, or treat it with contempt. Especially be upon your guard against impure productions, which tend to corrupt the imagination, and inflame the passions. These are sometimes very insidious by setting forth vice in a veiled decorous dress. In short, whatever would tend to seduce the judgment from truth by false principles, or the heart from purity by corrupt motives, most resolutely shun.

The Bible occupies a place of its own, above and beyond all books. The throne of literature is its seat of royal and undisputed supremacy, and let your intellect, and heart, and will, bow in prostrate homage before it. Reason is not degraded but exalted by her submission to its authority. The chief value of the Bible consists in its revelation of the mind and will of God, his nature, perfections, works, and requirements. Its grand purpose is to manifest God Himself, Christ, salvation, immortality, and a future state of rewards and punishments. It is infallible because it is inspired; and is thus the standard of all religious and moral truth. It, and it only, can make us wise unto salvation. But apart from this, it has excellences which give it the supremacy over all other books. The Pentateuch, the book of Job, the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, are the oldest compositions in the world, being many centuries older than the Homeric poems, which are the next oldest of extant writings. Even on this ground it should be dear to the lovers

of antiquity. It gives us, what no other book does or can give, an account of the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, the entrance of evil, and the cause of the corruption of mankind, the universal deluge, (of which there are traces and traditions in almost all parts of the earth,) the diversity of languages, the heads of the different tribes of the human family, the institution of sacrifice, the origin of the Jewish nation, and other matters important to be known, and to be known only here. As a book of literature, the Bible has inestimable value. Hence the eulogy of that distinguished oriental scholar and prodigy of general knowledge, Sir William Jones, who wrote on the fly-leaf of his Bible, "I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion, that the volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books in whatever language they may have been written." In proof of this, if proof is necessary, I refer you to the opening chapters of Genesis, the history of Joseph, the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, the scenes of Mount Sinai, the book of Job, many of the Psalms, various portions of the prophetic writings, the sermon upon the Mount, the book of the Apocalypse. No doubt you will find many things in the patriarchal history which are very peculiar, and which may sometimes excite your surprise. In explanation of this, you should recollect the world was then in its infancy, and men were dealt with as children in knowledge. This very familiarity of God with the good men of those days seems to have been necessary on account of their contracted ideas.

Study the Bible then, first of all as the book of salvation, your guide to everlasting life; and next for its ineffable beauties and varied information. And to assist you in this sacred study I recommend the following books,* Nichol's "Help to the Reading of the Bible," an invaluable work for gaining a knowledge of the history of the sacred records; Gilfillan's "Bards of the Bible;" a most excellent volume, published by the Religious Tract Society, entitled, "A Handbook for the Bible;" if you wish to possess a commentary, obtain Barnes's; if you would desire, as you should, to become acquainted with the evidences of Christianity, read Rogers, Paley, Chalmers, and Butler.

Subordinate to the Book of books, obtain, and devoutly read for your own personal salvation, one or other, or all of the following works: Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;" Pike's "Persuasives to Early Piety;" Mr Binney's work on "Making the best of both Worlds;" and if I may without censurable egotism refer to my own books, I would mention, "The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation Encouraged and Directed," a little tract which I believe God has honoured and blessed for the conversion not only of hundreds, but of thousands; "The Young Man's Guide to Immortality;" "Female Piety;" and "The Young Man from Home;" and the several series of the Lectures, delivered in Exeter Hall, to the Young Men's Christian Association.

As to general studies, you should take delight in History; it is a subject in which you ought to be at

* In the enumeration of the following books it is not, of course, my intention to give directions for a complete library, but only to enumerate a few works which may be read with advantage, and are most easily obtained.

home. History has been appropriately called philosophy teaching by facts. And where should you begin? Of course with your own country. It would be a deep disgrace to be ignorant of the annals of the dear land of your birth. Do not be satisfied with names, dates, places, and events; but mark the causes of events, changes, and the advancement of civilization, liberty, and law. The historians of our country are too numerous to be all of them read, or even enumerated. Sir James Mackintosh's work, unhappily interrupted by his death, but ably continued by another hand, will interest you. Hume's style is so simply elegant, and his matter so philosophical, as to be attractive; but besides his infidelity, he is not trustworthy as to facts. Lingard is a Roman Catholic, and manifests the influence of his religion in his statements. Henry is a very instructive writer. Who would not read the fascinating pages of Macaulay, and who does not wish he may live to complete them? Next to the history of your own country, take up that of Greece and Rome, nations which have borne so important a part in the liberty, the civilization, and the literature of the world. Read Arnold's Fragment of Roman Story: alas, that it should be only a fragment, and that his accomplished mind was not allowed to finish it. Merivale's works on the Empire and the Republic are beautifully written, and of great value. Gibbon's magnificent "History of the Decline and Fall of the Empire," should be read by every one, but with caution and deep regret on account of its sneering and only half-concealed infidelity. On Greece there is a delightful summary, by Jacob, a German writer, now translated into English. The larger works of Thirlwall and Grote, when time

and money can be commanded, should be read by all who would wish to become acquainted with that wondrous people, the Greeks. For the history of ancient nations, Rollin should be consulted. On church history, peruse Dean Waddington for his conciseness, it forms one of the volumes of the Library of Useful Knowledge; Milner for his piety, and Neander for his comprehension, accuracy, and philosophical spirit.

Poetry is a bewitching, and if not of a strictly moral character a most dangerous kind of literature. You must, you ought, you will, read it. Man's soul is constituted to be delighted by the melody of numbers, to be fascinated with the beautiful creations of fancy, and to be captivated by the embodiment of the feelings of our nature in forms appealing to the imagination. Yet recollect that the imagination is not the highest faculty of the soul, and should ever be held in subordination to the judgment, the will, and the conscience. Poetry should be considered rather as an occasional gratification than as an habitual employment of the mind. It refines our sensibilities, and polishes our taste; but adds little to our information. We are not, however, of his mode of thinking and feeling who was so wrapt up in utilitarian logic, that after hearing high eulogiums on Milton's immortal work, exclaimed, "Yes, very fine, but what does it prove?" Prove! why that he was a blockhead for asking the question. I need not recommend Milton: I will not recommend Byron. Walter Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Campbell, Tennyson, Longfellow, all have charms; but if you would have poetry and piety united, read Cowper, Montgomery, Pollock, Mrs Hemans, Jane Taylor.

Natural History offers a boundless field of exhaust-

less research and interest. The sublime wonders of astronomy elevate and almost bewilder the mind, and give it exalted ideas of the power and opulence of the Great Creator; while geology has the same effect; the one presenting illimitable space, the other illimitable duration. Chemistry, optics, and especially electricity, by its all but miraculous application to the common arts, and the communication of knowledge round the world upon the lightning's wing, invite your researches. Botany shows that the weed of the desert and the plant on Alpine Mountains, no less than the orb that rolls through measureless space, obey the laws, occupy the locality, and accommodate themselves to the order, appointed by their Creator. While entomology, by the aid of the microscope, brings out a world unseen, invisible to unaided vision, and shows the skill of the Almighty Artificer, as strikingly in the wing of an insect, or the eye of an animalcule, as in the bulk of an elephant, the strength of the lion, or the flight of an eagle. Read, my children, some of the numerous works which the present age supplies on these various subjects. Among other works, peruse "Humboldt's Cosmos;" "Dick's Christian Philosopher," and his other books; "Orr's Circle of the Sciences;" and Cassel's work on the same subject: Dr. King's little work on the accordance of Geology with Revealed Religion, is the treatise of a philosophic mind. When you can procure them, buy the series of the publications of the Library of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge; and the monthly volumes, as well as very many others of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, especially its "Leisure Hour." When you can meet with it, and can afford it, obtain "Conder's Modern Traveller."

If history is philosophy teaching by facts, Biography is philosophy teaching by the character and actions of living men. It is, perhaps, the most interesting and instructive species of writings, when well executed. To see how others act, meet and overcome difficulties, resist temptation, avail themselves of opportunities, and either rise or fall, according to their own conduct, cannot but be of service to us. The range of biography is so wide that it is difficult to select and specify. "The Lives of the Reformers," by the Tract Society; "The Life of Henry Martyn," "The Earnest Student;" "Johnson's Lives of the Poets," and his own Life by Boswell; "The Life of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton;" and "The Successful Merchant;" may all be read with advantage.

If you have an inclination to study Metaphysics, Payne's Elements of Mental and Moral Science is a valuable work, and not too extended or profound for even the youthful mind unaccustomed to such studies.

As to that class of books denominated Novels, I join with every other moral and religious writer in condemning, as vile trash, a very large portion of the productions, which under this name, have carried a turbid stream of morbid sentimentalism, impure feeling, and perverted action, into the hearts and lives of multitudes. All who are wise, should despise them; and all who are good, abhor them. It is true, and it is a gratifying fact, that some modern writers of tales have elevated the standard of both taste and morals in this department of literature, and sent into oblivion a thousand miserable scribblers of love stories; whose works are now to be found only on the shelves of third-rate circulating libraries, and read by few except servant girls. Scott, Bulwer, Dickens, and Thackeray, have

done good in this way. But we must lament they have generally ignored the momentous subject of religion, and in some instances written slightingly of it; and whatever may be said of their morals they have no sympathy with the piety of God's holy word.

Still I do not mean to say that works of fiction ought to be entirely avoided. It may be that the higher and purer class of them do display, elicit, and cherish genius, polish and guide taste, and afford rational entertainment. They also may be, and have been, the means of conveying instruction. The great moralist, Doctor Johnson, tells us that this, amongst many other arts of instruction, has been invented that the reluctance against truth might be overcome: and as medicine is given to children in confections, precepts of morality and religion have been hidden under a thousand appearances, that mankind may be allured by pleasure to escape destruction. In his beautiful allegory of "Truth, Falsehood, and Fiction," he represents Truth as so repeatedly foiled in her contests with Falsehood, that in the bitterness of disappointment, she petitions Jupiter to be called back to her native skies, and leave mankind in the misery and disorder which they have deserved, by submitting willingly to the usurpation of her antagonist. Instead of granting her request, her ecommended her to consult the Muses by what method she might obtain an easier reception, and reign without the toil of incessant war. It was then discovered she obstructed her own progress by the severity of her aspect, and the solemnity of her dictates; and that men would never willingly admit her, till they ceased to fear her; since by giving themselves up to Falsehood, they seldom make any sacrifice of ease

or pleasure, because she took the state that was most engaging, and always suffered herself to be dressed and painted by Desire. The Muses wove in the loom of Pallas a loose and changeable robe, like that in which Falsehood captivated her admirers; with this they invested Truth, and named her Fiction. She now went again to conquer with more success. For when she demanded entrance of the Passions, they often mistook her for Falsehood, and delivered up their charge; but when she had once taken possession, she was soon disrobed by Reason, and shone out in her original form, with native effulgence and resistless beauty.*

This is ingenious, plausible, and true in the main, and therefore I pronounce no sweeping sentence of condemnation upon all works of fiction. Our Lord employed it in his holy ministry, for what else are his beautiful and instructive parables? Still let the works of fiction which you read be of the purest kind, adapted to promote a robust, and healthy, and not a relaxed tone of moral feeling, and at the same time such as will inspire a manly sensibility, and not an effeminate sentimentalism. And let them be only occasionally, and not habitually the subject of your reading. He that dwells perpetually in the region of imagination and amidst ideal scenes, (which generally are raised above nature,) will be unfit for the stern realities of ordinary life. A young man in perpetual converse with heroes and heroines, (and

* "The Rambler," a work which, with "The Spectator," has fallen almost into oblivion in modern times; but though they are not religious books in the strict sense of that term, and contain some principles not quite in accordance with evangelical piety, they afford a vast fund of fine writing, and, upon the whole, good moral instruction.

such are usually the staple of fiction,) will find it difficult to content himself with the intercourse of men of like passions with himself. Works of fiction are to the mind pretty much what stimulants are to the body, an intoxicating draught; in reference to all, if total abstinence be not recommended, a strict government of the appetite must be maintained, and the greatest moderation observed. For my own part, I could never find half the interest in the best written novels, even Scott's, which I do in a good history. Here all is life, variety, and interest: here is every thing to amuse and recreate: here, virtue is enforced, and vice condemned, by facts which bring out the happiness of the one and the misery of the other: here are passions, motives, actions, exhibited in living characters, and sent home upon the heart by the powerful aid of the conviction that these are facts. Who is not conscious, after reading a tale, however exquisite, of the corrective power of the thought, "This is after all only a tale." Our attention may have been fixed, our passions excited, our very soul absorbed; but do we not, on laying down the book and recovering from the allusion, feel as if we had been almost cheated by an unreality? Is the moral impression of fiction so deep and lasting as that of history? Do not the lessons of the latter abide longer with us than those of the former?

Our age is also characterised by a taste, and by supplies to meet it, for works of humour and satire, of a very popular and fascinating nature. We cannot step upon the platform of a railway, without having these amusing periodicals thrust into our face. It is a fact worth knowing and remembering, that the late Dr.

Arnold affirmed that he had perceived a visible decline in the thoughtfulness, seriousness, and dignity of his pupils, since the habitual reading of works of humour had become so common. Whatever may be said of an occasional converse with the most popular personage of Her Majesty's dominions, to make him your constant companion, will unfit you for the society of more grave and serious counsellors. Persons of middle life, or advanced years, will derive less injury, even from constant reading such works, than you will.

Again, I say, cultivate your minds by making a familiar acquaintance with books; but in this case, as in that of associates, anxiously, earnestly, and constantly take heed you do not fall into bad company.

PRAYER.

Infinitely glorious Lord God Almighty, who dwellest in light which no mortal eye could look upon, accept my sincere gratitude for the gift of my intellect, and the preservation of my understanding. I praise thee that I am neither idiotic nor lunatic, but enjoy the clear exercise of my rational faculties. Help me to improve as well as employ, my rational powers. Give me a natural thirst after knowledge, and assist me to acquire enlarged and continually enlarging acquaintance with all thy works and ways. May I be able to follow thy footprints in the material world; and looking through nature up to nature's God, may I discern thy power, wisdom, and benevolence, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. May I see thy constant interposition as the God of Providence, in the affairs of nations. Thou art in all history. May I see thee there. I bless thee for the art of printing, which I trace up to thy kind and wise arrangement. I praise thee for the innumerable multitudes of books on all subjects, which great and good men have written; and deplore the productions which infidel, heretical, and immoral men, have sent sent forth to mis-

lead the judgment, corrupt the heart, demoralize the life, and destroy the soul. Help me to be upon my guard against bad books. Assist me to avoid an unsanctified curiosity, content and thankful to be ignorant of many things. Aid me in the perusal of proper books, to discern in all things what is true, to love what is good, and remember and practise what is wise. Save me from all pride of intellect, and may I desire knowledge not merely for its own sake, but that I may be virtuous, holy, and useful. Above all books may I prize and love the Bible. By it, may I be made wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ. May I grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER XV.

AMUSEMENTS AND RECREATIONS.

It is a trite remark, that the mind, like a bow, will lose its power by being always strained; and that occasional relaxation from the cares of business is necessary to preserve the vigour and elasticity of the human faculties. Allowing this to be true, it becomes a question, in what way recreation may be lawfully sought; or, in other words, what kinds of amusement may be innocently resorted to. Here two rules may be laid down.

1. All recreations are improper which have an injurious influence upon the moral and religious character. This is an axiom. No reasoning is necessary to support it; no eloquence is requisite to illustrate it: none but an atheist can oppose it.

2. All recreations are improper which in their nature have a tendency to dissipate the mind, and unfit it for the pursuits of business; or which encroach too much on the time demanded for our necessary occupations. This rule is as intelligible and as just as the former.

These two directions, the propriety of which all must admit, will be quite sufficient to guide us in the choice of amusements.

I. There are some diversions which by leading us to inflict pain produce cruelty of disposition.

A reluctance to occasion misery even to an insect, is not a mere decoration of the character which we are left at liberty to wear or to neglect; but is a disposition which we are commanded to cherish as matter of duty. It is not mere sensibility, but a necessary part of virtue. It is impossible to inflict pain, and connect the idea of gratification with such an act, without experiencing some degree of mental obduracy. We are not surprised that he who while a boy amused himself in killing flies, should when he became a sovereign exhibit the character of a cruel and remorseless tyrant. To find pleasure in setting brutes to worry and devour each other, is a disposition truly diabolical; and the man who can find delight in dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, is quite prepared to imitate those cannibals who, in the popular insurrections and massacres of the French revolution, sported with the mangled carcases and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the gardens of the Tuillieries.

Horse-racing, in addition to the cruelty with which it is attended, generally assembles on the course all the gamesters, swindlers, and black-legs in the neighbourhood, and is the cause of much drunkenness, debauchery, and ruin. And how much is it to be deplored, and how loudly does it call for legislative interference, that there are betting-houses not only in the metropolis, but in our provincial towns, to which lists of the running horses at the different races are weekly transmitted, and to which youth are allured for the purpose of betting! Horse-racing is a wholesale system of gambling, that has led

to the ruin of hundreds, and the murder and suicide of many. Have we forgotten the Rugeley tragedy and the history of the murderer Palmer? Is it not to be deplored that such a system of amusement, so prolific of crime, should receive the sanction of our aristocracy, and even of royalty itself, and that even the momentous business of the senate should be sometimes suspended to afford an opportunity to our legislators to be upon the turf?

All field sports of every kind are in my view condemned by the laws of humanity. Shooting, coursing, hunting, angling, are all cruel. What agony is inflicted in hooking a worm or a fish; in maiming a bird; in chasing and worrying a hare. To find sport in doing this, is inhuman and unchristian. To say that these animals are given for food and must be killed, is not a reply to my argument. I am not contending against killing them or eating them, but against the act of killing them for sport. The infliction of death under any circumstances, and upon any creature, however insignificant in the scale of creation, is too serious a matter to be a source of amusement. No two terms can be more incongruous than death and sport. Death is the enemy even of brutes; and the irrational creation manifest symptoms of instinctive horror at his approach; and to find delight in throwing the shuddering victim to the devourer, is shocking. I would extend these remarks to all animals, and say, that it is unlawful to find sport in killing such as are noxious. Wolves, bears, serpents, are to be destroyed when their continuance endangers human life; but to find pleasure in the act of killing even these, has a hardening tendency on the human heart.

II. Some amusements tend to cherish selfish and avaricious feelings, and at the same time to produce that gambling taste which leads to the utter ruin of both the temporal and eternal interests of mankind. Billiards, cards, dice, have this tendency: and indeed, all other games that are played for money. The object of the player in these games is to get money by a hasty process. What arts of fraud and deception are often resorted to, in order to avoid the loss and shame of defeat, and secure the gain and honour of success! What anger and ill-will are often produced in the mind of the unsuccessful party! Even the rules of decorum observed in polished society, are not sufficient, in many cases, to restrain the passionate invective, and the profane oath. I may here most confidently appeal to the frequenters of the card-table, for the truth of what I say, when I affirm, that a want of success during an evening at whist is a trial of temper which few are able to bear, with honour to themselves, or the comfort of those around them. Passion, petulance, and sullenness are always waiting under the table, ready to appear in the person and conduct of the loser. I have had scenes described to me by spectators of them, which I should have thought a disgrace to the vulgar company assembled at an ale-house, much more to a genteel party in a drawing-room. Have not the most serious misunderstandings arisen from this source between man and wife! What wrath and fury has the latter, by her tide of ill success, brought down upon her head from her irritated husband! The winner sees all this, retains his ill-gotten gain, and knows not all the while that a chilling frost of selfishness is upon his heart, freezing up the generous feelings of his nature. Nothing is more

bewitching than the love of gambling. The winner having tasted the sweets of gain is led forward by the hope of still greater gain; while the loser plunges deeper and deeper in ruin, with the delusive expectation of retrieving his lost fortune. How many have ruined themselves and their families for ever by this mad passion! How many have thrown down the cards and dice, only to take up the pistol or the poison; and have rushed, with all their crimes about them, from the gambling-table to the fiery lake in hell!

To affirm that these remarks are applicable only to those who play high, is nothing; because it is the nature of vice to be progressive. Besides, it is a fact, that many tradesmen, and even labouring people, have ruined themselves by the love of play. It is, as I have said, a most ensnaring practice, leading on from one degree to another, till multitudes who begin with only an occasional game, end in the most confirmed and inveterate habits of gambling.

III. Some amusements tend to foster vanity and pride, while, at the same time, they generate a distaste for all the serious pursuits of religion, and the sober occupations of domestic life.

If I mistake not, these remarks will apply to balls and routs. I am not quite sure that the morals of society have not suffered considerable deterioration by assemblies. Circumstances are connected with this species of amusement, the tendency of which is more than questionable. The mode of dress adopted at these fashionable resorts; the nature of the employment; the dissipating tendency of the music, the conversation, and the general uproar; the lateness of the hour to which the dazzling scene is protracted; the love of dis-

play which is produced; the false varnish which is thrown over many a worthless character, by the fascinating exterior which he exhibits in a ball-room; have a tendency to break down the defences of virtue, and expose the character to the encroachments of vice. And if it were conceded, (which it certainly cannot be,) that no immoral consequence results to those who occupy the upper walks of life, and are protected by the decorum of elegant society, yet what mischief is produced to their humble imitators, who attend the assemblies which are held in the barn or the ale-house! Among these I look upon dancing to be a practice fraught with immorality; and my soul is horrified at this moment by remembering the details of a most tragic event which occurred in this neighbourhood a few years since to an interesting female, who, after having lost her virtue on the night that followed a dance, was found, a few hours after, murdered either by her seducer or herself. Have nothing to do then, with this fascinating, though injurious, species of amusement. Besides, what an encroachment does it make upon the time demanded for other pursuits! How does it dissipate the mind, and poison it with a vain and frivolous taste for dress and personal decoration! How completely does it unfit the soul for piety, and even the necessary occupations of domestic life! Let there be a love once acquired for these elegant recreations by any female, and, from my heart, I pity the man who is destined to be her husband.

My opinion of the stage I shall reserve for a separate chapter; in the mean time I shall reply to a question which, no doubt, ere this, you are ready to ask, What amusements I would recommend? Before I answer that question I would say, Curb your desire after any

amusement. I believe that the excessive love of pleasure and the stimulants supplied to excite and gratify it, constitute one of the most portentous signs of the times. I am afraid we are in danger of sinking down into a light-minded frivolous people, and losing something of the robust manhood of the English character. Pleasure is becoming something more than the occasional restorative of the wearied and exhausted mind, and is likely, if things go on as they are now progressing, to be resorted to as its daily food; and what would that be, but living on cordials and elixirs. Restrain your love of pleasure then, and do not consider it a necessary of life.

I do not hesitate at once to observe, that young people stand in much less need than is supposed, of any amusement, properly so called. Their spirits are buoyant, their cares are light, their sorrows are few, and their occupations rarely very fatiguing to the mind. Whatever is necessary beyond mere change of employment, I should say, may be found in engagements both strengthening to the body and improving to the mind. A country ramble amidst the beauties of nature, where, surrounded by sights and sounds which have awakened and cherished the spirit of poetry, we may admire the works of God and man together, will, to every mind of taste or piety, be quite enough to refresh and stimulate the wearied faculties.

The perusal of an entertaining and instructive book, where our best authors have said their best things, and in their best manner too, will have the same effect. My children, acquire a taste for reading. Aspire to be independent of the butterfly pursuits of the pleasure hunter. Seek for that thirst after knowledge, which, when the soul is jaded with the dull and daily round of

secular affairs, shall conduct her to the fountains of thought contained in the well-stocked library: where, as she drinks the pure perennial streams of knowledge, she forgets in their murmurs the toils of the day. Or the study of natural philosophy, attended, where an apparatus can be commanded, with a course of illustrative experiments, would be at once refreshing and instructive. And where young people are happily situated beneath the wing of their parents, the pleasures of home, the agreeable intercourse of the domestic circle, are no mean and insufficient recreations from the fatigues of business.

But perhaps many a youthful bosom will at this thought heave a sigh, and sorrowfully exclaim, "I am not at home. In that beloved retreat, and with its dear inhabitants, I should want no amusements. My father's greeting smile; my mother's fond embrace; the welcome of my brothers and my sisters; the kind looks, the fond inquiries, the interesting though unimportant conversation of all, would recruit my strength, and recreate my mind. But I am far from these. I am in a distant town, a stranger in a strange place; a mere lodger, where the attentions which I receive are all bought and paid for. Wearied and dispirited, I ofttimes return from the scene of labour, and find in the cold and heartless salutation of my host, and the dreary solitude of my own chamber, that I am indeed not at home. Often and often, as I sit musing away the hour that intervenes between business and sleep, and carrying out into painful contrast my lodgings and my home, I involuntarily exclaim, 'My friends, do they now and then send a wish or a thought after me?' Who can wonder that in such a situation I should occasionally

pay a visit to the theatre, and seek to forget that I am not at home, by amusements which have a tendency to drown reflection and divert my mind. Oh! give me again the pleasures of home, and I will make a cheerful surrender of all that I have adopted as their substitutes."

I feel for such young persons. I too have been in their situation: I have felt all that they feel. I have wept at the contrast between being a stranger and a happy child at home. I too have returned at night to meet the silent look, or cheerless greeting of the hostess, instead of the smiling countenance and fond expression of the mother that bore me, the father that loved me. I too have retired to my room to weep at thoughts of home. I can therefore sympathize with you. And shall I tell you how, in these circumstances, I alleviated my sorrows and rendered my situation, not only tolerable, but even sometimes pleasant? By the exercises and influence of true religion; by the intercourse of a holy fellowship with pious companions; and by the assistance of books. Try, do be persuaded to try, the same means.

"Religion, what treasures untold
Reside in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford."

This will find you a home, and a father and friends in every place. It will soften your banishment, and open to you springs of consolation, which will send their precious streams into your forlorn abode. It will render you independent of the theatre and the ball-room. It will guard you from vices, which, when committed, render the recollection of home still more

intolerable. It will give you an interest and a share in all the religious institutions which are formed in the congregation with which you associate, and will thus offer you recreation in the exercise of holy and enlightened philanthropy.

Amusements, in the usual acceptation of the word, are but the expedients resorted to by the ignorant and unsanctified mind of man for happiness: the ineffectual efforts to restore that peace which man lost by the fall, and which nothing but true piety can bring back to the human bosom. In departing from God, the soul of man strayed from the pasture to the wilderness, and now is ever sorrowfully exclaiming, as she wanders on, Who will show us any good? To relieve her sense of want, and satisfy her cravings, she is directed to amusements, but they prove only the flowers of the desert, which, with all their beauty, do not satisfy. No, no. It is the return of the soul to God through faith in Jesus Christ which alone can give true and satisfying delight. Believing in him, we have peace that passes understanding, the judgment is at rest in the contemplation of the first truth, and the heart in the enjoyment of the chief good. Peace with God, attended by peace of conscience, producing peace with the world, and affording a foretaste of peace beyond the grave, gives a feast to the soul, compared with which worldly pleasures are but as rank and gaudy flowers round the food of an hungry man, adding nothing to its relish by their colours, and only spoiling it by their odours. Religion conducts us to the fountain of living waters, and shows that these things are but broken cisterns that can hold no water. Amusements are but expedients to make men happy without piety: the

mere husks, which those only crave after, and feed upon, who are destitute of the bread which cometh down from heaven; and which are rejected by those who have their appetite satisfied with this celestial manna.

In addition to this, cultivate a taste for reading. Employ your leisure hours in gaining knowledge. Thus even your situation will be rendered comparatively comfortable, and the thoughts of home will neither destroy your happiness, nor send you for consolation to the polluting sources of worldly amusement.

But there are some who will reply, "I have neither taste for religion nor reading, and what amusements do you recommend to me?" None at all. What, that man talk of amusement, who, by his own confession, is under the curse of heaven's eternal law, and the wrath of heaven's incensed King? Amusement! what, for the poor wretch who is on the brink of perdition, the verge of hell, and may the next hour be lifting up his eyes in torments, and calling for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue! Diversion! what, for him who is every moment exposed to that sentence, "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" What, going on to that place where the worm dies not, and the fire is never quenched; where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and calling for amusements! Oh monstrous inconsistency! I have heard of prisoners dancing in their chains, but who ever heard of a poor creature asking for amusements on his way to the place of execution! This is your case. While you have no taste for religion, you are certainly under sentence of eternal death. You are every day travelling to execution. Yet you are asking

for amusements! And what will be your reflections in the world of despair, to recollect that the season of hope was employed by you, not in seeking the salvation of the soul and everlasting happiness, but in mere idle diversions, which were destroying you at the very time they amused you. Then will you learn, when the instruction will do you no good, that you voluntarily relinquished the fulness of joy which God's presence affords, and the eternal pleasures which are to be found at his right hand, for the joy of fools, which as Solomon truly says, is but as "the crackling of thorns beneath the pot." Before you think of amusement seek for religion.

PRAYER.

Great God, thou knowest the situation in which I am placed in this world, where I am surrounded on every hand by incitements to vain, sinful, and polluting pleasures, and with temptations to the indulgence of criminal appetites and degrading tastes. I see many around me sunk in frivolity, wasting time and money in recreations which, if not vicious, are interfering with their duties, and unfitting them for the more grave and necessary pursuits of human life. Help me, by thy grace, to avoid the perilous course in which they are engaged. Save me from being a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. May I never follow after the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. May I restrain even my desire after innocent gratification within proper limits. Refine and elevate my taste. May I find perpetual recreation in true religion, in habits of industry, mental cultivation, social excellence, and active benevolence. Preserve me from being captivated and lost by the Siren song of pleasure: and instead of being ever eager after enjoyment in this world, may I be preparing for those pleasures which are at thy right hand, and that fulness of joy which is in thy presence for evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI.

THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS.

I DO not scruple to pronounce the theatre to be one of the broadest avenues which lead to destruction; fascinating, no doubt it is, but on that account the more delusive and the more dangerous. Let a young man once acquire a taste for this species of entertainment, and yield himself up to its gratification, and he is in imminent danger of becoming a lost character, rushing upon his ruin. All the evils that can waste his property, corrupt his morals, blast his reputation, impair his health, embitter his life, and destroy his soul, lurk in the purlieus of a theatre. Vice, in every form, lives, and moves, and has its being there. Myriads have cursed the hour when they first exposed themselves to the contamination of the stage. From that fatal evening they date their destruction. Then they threw off the restraints of education, and learned how to disregard the dictates of conscience. Then their decision, previously oscillating between a life of virtue and a life of vice, was made for the latter. I will attempt to support by arguments and facts these strong assertions.

The stage cannot be defended as an amusement; for the proper end of an amusement is to recreate without

fatiguing or impairing the strength or spirit. It should invigorate, not exhaust the bodily and mental powers; should spread agreeable serenity over the mind and be enjoyed at proper seasons. Is midnight the time, or the heated atmosphere of a theatre the place, or the passionate tempestuous excitement of a deep tragedy the state of mind, that comes up to this view of the design of amusement? Certainly not. But what I wish particularly to insist upon is, the immoral and anti-christian tendency of the stage. In order to judge of this, let us look at the precepts of God's word. Here I will select a few out of many passages of the Holy Scriptures.

Texts which relate to our conversation, or the right use of speech. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners." "Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." "But above all things, my brethren, swear not." It is evident from these passages, that the Bible forbids all conversation which is idle, impure, or obscene, and commands us to employ the gift of speech in no other way than that which is good and to the use of edifying. Now I confidently ask if there is one popular play ever performed which is not polluted, in very many places, by

the grossest and most shocking violations of these sacred rules. What irreverend appeals to heaven, what horrible abuse of the thrice holy name of God, what profane swearing, what filthy conversation, what lewd discourse, are poured forth upon the stage! Can it be a lawful entertainment to be diverted by hearing men and women insult God by cursing, swearing, and taking his holy name in vain? It is nothing to say that this is only done by the actors, and not by the spectators, because we are commanded not to be partakers, even by countenance, of other men's sins?

Passages of Scripture which condemn all impurity of mind and conduct. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." "I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Now the works of the flesh are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It must be evident to every one who reads with impartiality the word of God, that the most remote approach to lewdness is forbidden by the Scriptures, even the excursions of the imagination, and the wanton exercise of the senses. It is obviously the design of the Bible to form a character of the most elevated and refined purity, in which the concupiscible passions shall be in a state of entire subjection to undefiled religion. Now, I ask, is it possible to comply with this design, if we attend the theatre, where, in every possible way, appeals are made to the animal propensities of our nature? Will any man in his senses contend that a play-house is the place where men are taught to be pure

in heart, and assisted to oppose and mortify "those fleshly lusts which war against the soul?" "It is as unnecessary," says Law, "to tell the reader, that the play-house is in fact the sink of corruption and debauchery; that it is the general rendezvous of the most profligate persons of both sexes; that it corrupts the neighbourhood; and turns the adjacent places into public nuisances; this is as unnecessary as it is to tell him that the exchange is a place of merchandize."

Let me set before you also, a few passages which are given in Scripture to regulate our general conduct. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." "Flee youthful lusts." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Pray without ceasing." "Watch the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." "Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness charity." "Let your affections be set on things above, and not on things on the earth." "To be spiritually minded is life and peace, but to be carnally minded is death."

From these passages it is evident that the spirit enjoined, and the character to be formed, by revelation, consists of meekness, purity, spirituality of mind, heavenliness of affection, devotion, watchfulness against sin, caution not to go in the way of temptation. And it would be to insult the common sense of every one who is conversant with the stage, to ask if such dispositions as these are enjoined and cherished by dramatic representations. I suppose no one ever pretended that

these saintly virtues are taught by the tragic or the comic muse. If our Lord's sermon on the mount, or the twelfth chapter of the Romans, or any other portion of inspired truth, be selected as a specimen and a standard of christian morals, then certainly the stage must be condemned. Light and darkness are not more opposed to each other, than the Bible and the play book. If the one be good, the other must be evil; if the Scriptures are to be obeyed, the theatre must be avoided. The man who at church, on the Sabbath day, responds to the third or the seventh commandment, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law;" who presents so often on that day the petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," is, to say the least of his conduct, the most glaring instance of absurdity in the world, if he on other days attend the theatre.

The only way to justify the stage, as it is, as it ever has been, as it is ever likely to be, is to condemn the Bible: the same individual cannot defend both. The one is too strict, or the other is too lax. Now the Bible, the Bible, my dear children, is the standard of morals. No matter by what plausible arguments a practice may be defended; no matter by what authority it may be sanctioned, if it be in opposition to the letter or spirit of the Bible, it is wicked, and must be abandoned. Even were the stage as friendly to the cultivation of a right taste, as its warmest admirers contend; if in some things it tended to repress some of the minor faults or vices of society, yet if, as a whole, its tendency is to encourage immorality, it must be condemned, and abandoned, and deserted. All I ask you is to weigh its pretensions in the balances of the sanctuary, and to try

its merits by the only authorised standard of morals, the Bible, and sure I am you will never hesitate for a moment, to pronounce it unlawful.

It is an indubitable fact that the stage has flourished most in the most corrupt and depraved state of society; and that in proportion as sound morality, industry, and religion, advance their influence, the theatre is deserted. It is equally true, that amongst the most passionate admirers and most constant frequenters of the stage, are to be found the most dissolute and abandoned of mankind. Is it not too manifest to be denied that piety as instinctively shrinks from the theatre, as human life does from the point of a sword, or the draught of poison? Have not all those who have professed the most elevated piety and morality, borne an unvarying and uniform testimony against the stage? Even the most virtuous pagans have condemned this amusement, as injurious to morals, and the interests of nations: Solon, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Cato, Cicero, Livy, Valerius Maximus, Seneca, Tacitus, the most venerable men of antiquity, the brightest constellations of virtue and talents which ever appeared above the horizon of philosophy, all denounced the theatre as a most abundant source of moral pollution, and inform us that both Greece and Rome had their ruin accelerated by a fatal passion for these corrupting entertainments.* William Prynne, a satirical

* This chapter produced a pamphlet in answer to it the chief object of which was a defence of the stage; but since it virulently attacked the Author as a plagiarist, of the sermon entitled "Youth Warned" from Archbishop Tillotson, and of this chapter from Dr. Styles's Essay on the Stage, it bore the taking and retaliating title of the "Plagiarist Warned." The Author, in his sermon, expressly quoted several passages from the Archbishop, and marked with inverted commas others taken from him; and in a note at the conclusion

and pungent writer, who suffered many cruelties in the time of Charles I., has made a catalogue of authorities against the stage, which contains every name of eminence in the heathen and Christian worlds: it comprehends the united testimony of Jewish and Christian churches; the deliberate acts of fifty-four (ancient and modern,) general, national, provisional councils and synods, of the Western and Eastern churches; the condemnatory sentence of seventy-one ancient fathers, and of one hundred and fifty modern Popish and Protestant authors; the hostile opinions of philosophers and even poets; and the legislative enactments of a great

of the chapter he earnestly recommended the perusal of the Doctor's Essay; so that in each case he pointed out the source to which he had resorted. It will be seen, however, by those who will take the trouble to make the necessary comparison, that he made what he thus borrowed his own by working it up in his peculiar way. And no doubt persons of sufficient reading have observed the like in many other passages of his works.

The list of authorities given in the text is manifestly taken from the Doctor; but they are those transcribed (in translations, or rather paraphrases,) by Jeremy Collier, with the exception of Solon and Cato. The pamphleteer remarking on these two names, relates the instance of Solon's reprehension of the stage; but is puzzled at the mention of Cato, not knowing the exclamation—"Cato severe cur in theatrum venisti?" And he sets out each passage which he thinks alluded to, with comments on it designed to show that it did not bear upon the question, or did not support the Author's views; and quotes what he calls an interpolation in Livy by the author of an anonymous pamphlet published in 1768, entitled "The Stage the High Road to Ruin." This alleged interpolation is in fact Jeremy Collier's free translation of the passage; and if the critic had known the learned Nonjuror's work, he would have found the meaning of the authors cited was more to the purpose than he makes out. As it is, he attacks William Prynne, in whose book these few quotations are lost, accusing him of the kindred crimes of forging Laud's Diary, and "selecting" records in favour of monarchical usurpations. Ed.

number of Pagan and Christian states, nations, magistrates, emperors, and princes.

The American Congress, soon after the declaration of Independence, passed the following resolution: "Whereas, true religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness. "Resolved, that it be, and hereby is, earnestly recommended by the several States, to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners."

Now must not this be regarded in the light of very strong presumptive evidence of the immoral tendency of the stage? Does it not approach as near as can be to the general opinion of the whole moral world?

But let us examine the average character of the productions which are represented on the stage. If we go to tragedy, we shall find that pride, ambition, revenge, suicide, the passionate love of fame and glory, (all of which Christianity is intended to extirpate from the human bosom,) are inculcated by the most popular plays in this department of the drama. It is true, gross cruelty, murder, and that lawless pride, ambition, and revenge, which trample on all the rights and interests of mankind, are reprobated; but I would ask, who needs to see vice acted, in order to hate it; or will its being acted for our amusement be likely to increase our hatred of it upon right principles? As to comedy, this is a thousand times more polluting than tragedy. Love and intrigue, prodigality dressed in the garb of gene-

rosity, profaneness dignified with the name of fashionable spirit, and even seduction and adultery, are the usual materials which the comic muse combines and adorns, to please and instruct her votaries. This department of the drama is almost unmixed pollution. How often is some profligate rake introduced to the spectators, (furnished with a few traits of frankness and generosity, to interest them by his vicious career,) who reconciles them all to his crimes, so far as to make them tolerate his atrocities, for the sake of his open-hearted, good-humoured virtues. Who can wonder that young women should be prepared by such stuff, for an intrigue with a bold and wily adventurer; or that young men should be encouraged to play the good-natured, heroic rake, which they have seen such a favourite with the public on the stage? Besides, how saturated, as I have already observed, are both tragedies and comedies with irreverend appeals to heaven, profane swearing, and all the arts of equivocation, and falsehood, and deception! What lascivious allusions are made, what impure passages are repeated! What a fatal influence must this have upon the delicacy of female modesty! Think too of a young man coming at the hour of midnight from such a scene, with his passions inflamed by every thing he has seen, and every thing he has heard; and then having to pass through ranks of wretched creatures waiting to ensnare him, and rob him of his virtue; does it not require extraordinary strength of principle to resist the attack?

I admit that modern plays are, in some measure, purified from the excessive grossness which polluted the performances of our more ancient dramatists. But who knows not that vice is more mischievous in some circles

of society, in proportion as it is more refined. The arch equivoque and double entendre, of modern plays, "are well understood, and applied by a licentious audience; and the buzz of approbation which is heard through the whole assembly, furnishes abundant proof that the effect is not lost." Little will go down with the public in the shape of comedy, farce, or opera, which is not pretty highly seasoned with indelicate allusions. Hence it is that even the newspaper critics, (whose morality is in general not of the most saintly character,) so often mention the too-barefaced indecencies of new plays. Dramatic writers know very well how to cater for the public taste.

How many sentiments are continually uttered on the stage, how many indelicate allusions are made, which no man who had any regard to the virtue of his sons, or the feelings of his daughters, would allow to be uttered at his table. Are not whole passages repeatedly recited, which no modest man would allow to be read before his family? Nothing but the countenance of numbers could induce many females to sit and listen to what they hear at a theatre. Were any man to quote in company expressions which are in constant iteration at the playhouse, would he not be regarded as a person most dangerous to the virtue of others? And yet these nauseating exhibitions are heard with pleasure, when they are heard with the multitude. Can this be friendly to modesty, to virtue, to piety? Must there not under such an influence be an insensible corrosion going on upon the fine polish of female excellence, and upon the moral principle of the other sex? Is this avoiding the appearance of evil? Is it in accordance with that morality which makes an unchaste feeling to be sin, and

that injunction which commands us to watch the heart with all diligence?

Then remember all the accompaniments of the stage, the fascinations of music, painting, action, oratory; and say if when these are enlisted in the cause of fiction, they do not raise the passions above their proper tone, and thus induce a dislike to grave and serious subjects, and a distaste for all the milder and more necessary virtues of domestic life.

Add to this the company which is generally attracted to the theatre. I do not say that all who frequent the theatre are immoral; by no means; but I do affirm, that the most polluting and polluted characters of the town are sure to be there. Is it not a fact that a person who would not wish to have his eyes and ears shocked with sights and sounds of indecency, must keep at a distance from the avenues of the stage, which are ever crowded with the loosest characters of both sexes? Sir John Hawkins, in his "Life of Johnson," has a remark which strikingly illustrates and confirms what I have now advanced.

"Although it is said of plays, that they teach morality, and of the stage, that it is the mirror of human life, these assertions have no foundation in truth, but are mere declamation; on the contrary, a play-house, and the region about it, are the hot-beds of vice. How else comes it to pass, that no sooner is a theatre opened in any part of the kingdom, than it becomes surrounded by houses of ill-fame? Of this truth, the neighbourhood of the place I am now speaking of (Goodman's Fields Theatre) has had experience; one parish alone, adjacent thereto, having, to my knowledge, expended the sum of £1300 in prosecutions, for the purpose of removing these inhabitants, whom, for instruction in the science of human life, the play-house had drawn thither."

The arguments against the stage are strengthened by

a reference to the general habits of the performers and the influence which their employment has in the formation of their character. And here I may assert, that the sentiments of mankind have generally consigned this wretched class of beings to infamy. The story of the unfortunate Laberius exhibits, in a strong point of view, the odium which was attached to the profession of an actor among the Romans. Compelled by Cæsar, at an advanced period of life, to appear on the stage to recite some of his own works, he felt his character as a Roman citizen insulted and disgraced; and in some affecting verses, spoken on the occasion, he incensed the audience against the tyrant, by whose mandate he was obliged to appear before them. "After having lived," said he, "sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning a Roman knight, but shall return to it this evening an infamous stage player. Alas! I have lived a day too long."

As to the feeling of modern times, is there a family in Britain, of the least moral worth, even amongst the middling class of tradesmen, which would not feel itself disgraced, if any one of its members were to embrace this profession? I ask, if the character of players is not in general so loose as to make it matter of surprise to find one that is truly moral? A performer, whether male or female, who maintains an unspotted reputation, is considered as an exception from the general rule. Their employment, together with the indolent line of life to which it leads, is most contaminating to their morals. The habit of assuming a feigned character, and exhibiting unreal passions, must have a very injurious effect on their principles of integrity and truth.

They are so accustomed to represent the arts of intrigue and gallantry, that it is little to be wondered at, if they should practise them in the most unrestrained manner.*

* Of the truth of this description of the moral character of actors and actresses, most convincing evidence is afforded by the disgusting disclosures which have lately been made in a court of law, in reference to two of the most celebrated performers of the day. In speaking of one of them, the "Times" paper observes, "The conduct of persons who appear on the stage has never been the most irreproachable; and it may be doubted whether such a mass of living vice as the actors and actresses but too generally present in their private lives, is not more injurious to public morals, than the splendid examples of virtue which they exhibit in their theatrical characters are useful. It appears, however, that Kean, the defendant in the cause which was tried yesterday, is advanced many steps in profligacy beyond the most profligate of his sisters and brethren of the stage. Some of Kean's letters are of so filthy a description that we cannot insert them. Yet have the managers of Drury Lane Theatre the effrontery to present, or to attempt presenting, such a creature to the gaze of a British audience, on Monday next. It is of little consequence to the nation whether the character of 'King Richard' or 'Othello' be well or ill acted; but it is of importance that public decency be not shocked, and public decency be outraged." Times, Jan. 18th, 1825.

Doubtless our morals and taste as a nation will be wonderfully improved by such lectures and examples as these. These are the characters which young men and young women are sent to the play-houses to admire; which husbands and wives, and sons and daughters are to witness, as teaching not only by theory but by practice, the vices that corrupt the mind and pollute society! An admirable school for morals truly! When will the virtuous part of the community, with unaminous and indignant voice, condemn the play-house as a moral nuisance, which no wise and good man ought to tolerate? Do I ask when? The time is at hand, as is evident from the pecuniary situation of almost every theatre in the kingdom.

I was visited some years ago by an individual who had been for a long time engaged as an actor, but who was then most anxious to be liberated from, what he had at length been brought to confess and to loathe, as a most immoral profession. In considerable distress, he implored me to assist him in endeavouring to flee from a situation,

Shuter, whose facetious powers convulsed whole audiences with laughter, and whose companionable qualities often "set the table in a roar," was a miserable being. The following anecdote, told from the best authority, will confirm this assertion; and I am afraid, were we acquainted with many of his profession, we should find that his case is by no means singular.

"Shuter had heard Mr Whitfield, and trembled with apprehension of a judgment to come; he had also frequently heard Mr Kinsman, and sometimes called upon him in London. One day, accidentally meeting him in Plymouth, after some years of separation, he embraced him with rapture, and inquired if that was the place of his residence; Mr Kinsman replied, 'Yes, but I am just returned from London, where I have preached so often, and to such large auditories, and have been so indisposed, that Dr Fothergill advised my immediate return to the country for change of air.' 'And I,' said Shuter, 'have been acting Sir John Falstaff so often, that I thought I should have died, and the physicians advised me to come into the country for the benefit of the air. Had you died, it would have been in serving the best of masters; but had I, it would have been in the service of the devil. Oh, sir, do you think I shall ever be called again? I certainly was once; and if Mr Whitfield had let me come to the Lord's table with him, I never should have gone back again. But the caresses of the great are exceedingly ensnaring. My Lord E. sent for me to day, and I was glad I could not go. Poor things! they are unhappy, and they want Shuter to make them laugh. But oh, sir! such a life as yours. As soon as I leave you, I shall be King Richard. This is what they call a good play, as good as some sermons. I acknowledge there are some striking and moral things in it; but after it, I shall come in again with my farce of 'A Dish of all sorts,' and knock all that on the head. Fine reformers we!" Poor Shuter! once more thou wilt be an object of sport to the frivolous and the gay, who will now laugh at thee, not for thy drollery, but for thy seriousness; and this story probably will be urged against thee as the weakness of a noble mind; weakness let it be called, but in spite of himself, man must be

of which he felt it difficult to say whether the vice or the misery was the greater. Never did a captive more detest his fetters, or more covet to be free, than this poor creature did to be liberated from the thraldom in which he groaned.

serious at last. And when a player awakes to sober reflection, what agony must seize upon his soul. Let those auditories, which the comic performer has convulsed with laughter, witness a scene in which the actor retires and the man appears; let them behold him in the agonies of death, looking back with horror on a life of guilt, while despair is mingled with forebodings of the future. Players have no leisure to learn to die; and if a serious thought wander into the mind, the painful sigh which it excites is suppressed, and, with an awful desperation, the wretched creature rushes into company to be delivered from himself. A more careless, a more unreflecting being than a player cannot exist; for if an intense impression of the dignity of reason, the importance of character, and future responsibility be once felt, he can be a player no longer."

To send young people therefore to the play-house to form their manners, is to expect they will learn truth from liars, virtue from profligates, and modesty from harlots.

Can it then be right, even on the supposition that we could escape the moral contagion of the stage, to support a set of our fellow-creatures in idleness, and in a profession which leads to immorality, licentiousness, and profligacy?

But, my dear children, I have not only arguments to bring in proof of the immoral tendency of the stage, but I have facts, which it is useless to contend against. I am distressed, while I write, to think of the once promising young men, who, to my certain knowledge, have been utterly ruined by resorting to this scene of polluting amusement. I am not allowed to disclose the details, or I could unfold a tale that would shock every right feeling in your hearts.

It was but a few days since, that a venerable and holy man, now the deacon of a Christian church, said to me, "Sir, the theatre had nearly brought me to the gallows. There I found associates who introduced me

to every crime. When likely to be prevented by want of money from going to meet them at the theatre, I robbed my father, to gain a shilling for admission to the gallery."

Take warning then, and have nothing to do with the theatre. Avoid it as one of the avenues to the broad road which leads to destruction. Run not with the multitude to do evil. Be not thrown off your guard, and enticed to sin, by being directed to some who have never been injured by such amusements. Would it be any inducement to you to venture near a lazaretto that some one person was pointed out to you as having breathed an atmosphere tainted with the plague without receiving the infection? I admit that the danger is not the same in all cases. Individuals whose connexions habits and characters are formed may not receive so much injury as younger persons: though the most virtuous and moral cannot, I am sure, escape all harm; even they must have their mental purity injured, and their imagination corrupted; they must acquire a greater and greater distaste for religion, and irreverence towards God: but to young people, and to young men especially, the danger is greater than I can describe; to them the doors of the theatre are as the jaws of the devouring lion.*

* I most earnestly recommend to all young persons, who have any doubts upon this subject, or any taste for theatrical representations, the perusal of an admirable treatise on this subject by Dr. Styles, from whose work it is necessary to say a large portion of this chapter is taken.

See also a very striking representation of the unlawfulness of the stage, in Law's Treatise upon Christian Perfection.

PRAYER.

O THOU that art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and canst not look upon sin but with abhorrence, make me of one mind with thyself in all that regards transgression and holiness. Thou hast taught me to pray, Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. May I be sincere in presenting this petition, and never myself run into the way of temptation. Broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. And as this applies to the theatre, may I never be allowed to indulge a dangerous and sinful curiosity even to be once there. Let me not sit with vain persons, nor go in with dissemblers. Inspire me with dread and horror of the dangers of such places, and with a fixed and unalterable determination ever to avoid them. When sinners entice me, let me not consent. May I be willing to bear any scorn, ridicule, or contempt, rather than violate my conscience, afflict my parents, offend my God, and endanger my soul, by standing in the way of sinners, walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and sitting in the seat of the scornful. Mercifully hear my prayer, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER XVII.

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

You are born, my dear children, in no common age of the world and in no ordinary country. You have entered upon the stage of existence, when some of the most interesting scenes of the great drama are being presented. There are eras, when the moral world seems to stand still, or to retrograde; and there are others, when it is propelled with accelerated movements towards the goal. Ours is of the latter kind. After the dark and stormy epoch, which was terminated by the glorious revolution of 1688, the churches of Christ, blessed with religious liberty, sunk to inglorious repose. Little was done, either to improve the moral condition of our own population at home, or the state of heathen countries abroad. Whitfield and Wesley broke in upon this slumber, when it seemed to be most profound. From that time, the spirit of religious zeal awoke, and increasing its energies and multiplying its resources till our days, it now exhibits a glorious array of means and instruments, from which, in the long run, may be expected the conversion of the world.

Christendom presents at this moment a sublime and interesting spectacle in its Bible Societies, Missionary

Societies, Tract Societies, Sunday Schools, with all the other institutions adapted to the moral wants of every class and condition of mankind. War is not only declared, but prosecuted with vigour, against the powers of darkness; the hosts of the Lord are marching forth to the field of conflict; the sound of the trumpet is heard, and the call of and for warriors, floats on the gale. Spiritual patriotism is breathed into the souls of all denominations of Christians. Instruments of the holy warfare are invented and distributed, which suit the hands of persons of every rank, condition, stature, and strength; while females are invited to emulate the Spartan women of antiquity, and to assist in this conflict by the side of their fathers, husbands, and brothers.

All young people ought to enlist themselves in this cause. They should rise up into life, determined to do all the good they can, and to leave the world better than they found it. To see them reluctant to come forward, is an indelible disgrace to them. It is a poor, miserable kind of life to live only for ourselves; it is, in fact, but half-living. It is in opposition both to reason and revelation. He that does nothing to bless others, starves his own soul. You must therefore set out in life, my children, with a resolution, by God's help, to act the part of a religious philanthropist. "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Aspire to this honour. Think how many things you can already do. You can instruct a class of ignorant children in a Sunday school.* You can teach adults to

* It is to the great dishonour of many young people in affluent circumstances, that they are retiring from our Sunday Schools, and leaving the work to those who are in humbler life. Well, we must

read. You can distribute religious tracts. You can join in the labours of Bible associations, or in the exertions of juvenile missionary societies.

Here however, I must suggest a caution or two. Females, who are employed in the labour of collecting gratuitous contributions to public societies of any kind, should be very watchful against the least infringement on that delicacy and modesty of character which are the chief ornament of their sex. Their exertions, I know, are the life's blood of some causes; be it so: but let their benevolence flow like the vital fluid through the veins unseen, unheard. I believe that in general the strictest rules of modesty have been observed by the female collectors of our missionary societies; but I have heard of instances very much to the contrary. Happily, such cases are rare. I think it very questionable whether very young females, whose characters are scarcely formed, should be thus employed. It would be a source of mischief and regret, if the present mode of employing females in collecting for public institutions should abate one jot of that retiredness of disposition and love of home, which are so essential to the beauty and excellence of their character. A gossiping, unsettled, roving temper, which can be better pleased with wandering round the town from door to door, than performing the duties which fall to the lot of a grown-up daughter at home, is no ornament now, and affords but a forlorn hope of future worth. I confess I look with some degree of jealousy upon the efforts of female zeal, for if public spirit is to be mantained at the expense

do without them; but let them remember that for their indolence, or pride, or whatever else be the cause of their secession, they must give an account at the bar of Christ.

of private usefulness, the world will be no great gainer in the end. Exertions for the public should be regarded not as a substitute for, but a recreation from, the more stated duties of home.

It is more necessary still, perhaps, to caution young men against acquiring, by their activity, a bold, forward, obtrusive, and dictatorial temper. If zeal should render them conceited, vain, and meddling, it would be a heavy deduction from its clear amount of usefulness. There is some little danger lest Satan, perceiving it to be impossible to repress the ardour of youth, should attempt to corrupt it.

Observing these cautions, you cannot be too ardent in the cause of religion, and the interests of the human race. Those who are likely to form part of the middling classes of society, who are the sons and daughters of persons in comparatively affluent circumstances, and are likely, by the blessing of God, to occupy the same rank themselves, should feel most specially bound to consecrate their energies to the public welfare, inasmuch as they possess far more means of usefulness than others, and are likely to have greater influence in society. But even the poorest can do something. There is no one who is destitute of all the means of doing good. In France, during the reign of the late emperor, the conscription law extended to persons of all ranks in society; and in the same regiment the sons of the rich and of the poor contended, side by side, for the glory of their country; nor did the former think themselves degraded by such an association, they felt that to fight under the imperial and victorious eagle was an honour sufficient to annihilate every other consideration. How much more justly

will this apply to persons who are marshalled under the banner of the cross!

It is of the utmost importance that young people should begin life with a considerable portion of public spirit in their character; since it is rarely found that this virtue, if planted late, attains to any considerable magnitude, beauty, or fruitfulness. The seeds of benevolence should be sown, together with those of piety, in the first spring of our youth; then may we expect a rich autumnal crop. The first lesson which a child should learn from his parents is, how to be blessed; and the second, how to be a blessing.

You have been taught this, my children, from the very dawn of reason: now then practise it. Live for some purpose in the world. Act your part well. Fill up the measure of your duty to others. Conduct yourselves so that you shall be missed with sorrow when you are gone. Multitudes of our species are living in such a selfish manner that they are not likely to be remembered a moment after their disappearance. They leave behind them scarcely any traces of their existence, but are forgotten almost as though they had never been. They are, while they live, like a pebble lying unobserved amongst millions of others on the shore; and when they die, they are like that same pebble thrown into the sea, which just ruffles the surface, sinks, and is forgotten, without being missed from the beach. They are neither regretted by the rich, needed by the poor, nor celebrated by the learned. Who have been the better for their life? Who are the worse for their death? Whose tears have they dried up, whose wants supplied, whose miseries have they healed? Who would

unbar the gate of life, to re-admit them to existence; or what face would greet them back again to our world with a smile? Wretched, unproductive mode of existence! Selfishness is its own curse, it is a starving vice. The man that does no good gets none. He is like the heath in the desert, neither yielding fruit, nor seeing when good comes; a stunted, dwarfish, miserable shrub.

We are sent into the world to do good; and to be destitute of public spirit is to forget one half of our errand upon earth. Think what opportunity there is for the increase and operations of this noble disposition. We are in a world which abounds with evil. There are six hundred millions of immortal souls yet enslaved in their minds by the chains of Pagan superstition or Mahommedan delusion, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God and without hope in the world: there are one hundred and twenty millions following the Papal Beast, and bearing his image: there are nine millions of the seed of Abraham, wandering as vagrants over the face of the whole earth, with the thick veil of unbelief upon their hearts. In our own country, many towns and villages are yet unblessed with the faithful preaching of the gospel: multitudes of adults are still without Bibles to read, and myriads of children without knowledge of letters; ignorance of the grossest kind, vice of the most abominable forms, are to be found in every street. And then as to positive misery, what spectacles are to be seen in every collection of human abodes: where can we go and not hear the groans of creation ascending round us, and not see the tears of sorrow flowing in our path? Poverty meets us with its heart-

breaking tale of want and woe; disease in a thousand shapes appeals to our compassion; widows, orphans, destitute old men, and fatherless babes, with numbers ready to perish, are almost every where to be seen. Shall we live in the centre of so much sin, ignorance, and wretchedness, and not feel it our duty to do good? What a wretch must he be, who in such a world is destitute of public spirit! For all that selfishness ever hoarded, may you, my children, never be cursed with an unfeeling heart. Here is something for all to do, and all should do what they can.

Consider the felicity of doing good. Public spirit is a perennial source of happiness in a man's own bosom. The miser is rightly named; the word signifies miserable, and miserable he is. Benevolence is happiness. Its very tears are more to be desired than the most exulting smiles which avarice ever bestowed upon its accumulating treasures. Who does not covet that exquisite delight which Job must have experienced in the days of his prosperity, and of which he thus speaks: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, then it gave witness unto me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause that I knew not I searched out." O tell me, what are all the pleasures of sense or appetite, all the gay festivities of worldly amusements, when compared with this? To do good is to be like God in operation and bliss; for he is the blessed God because he is the merciful God.

Public spirit is most honourable. Even the heathen accounted a benefactor a most honourable character. Never does humanity appear adorned with so bright a crown of glory, as when distinguished benevolence united with humble piety, enters into the character. When a young lady, instead of frittering away her time in frivolous pursuits, parties of pleasure, personal decoration, or scenes of vanity, employs her hours in visiting the cottages of the poor, alleviating the sorrows of the wretched, reading to the sick, how like an angel does she appear: and one can almost fancy that she is watched with exalted delight, on her visits of mercy, by the heavenly messengers who minister to the heirs of salvation, and who hail her as a coadjutor in their embassies of love. What is the most celebrated beauty who ever became the centre of attraction, the object of voluptuous gaze, the subject of general envy to one sex, and of admiration to the other, when, amidst the blaze of diamonds, and the perfumery of the East, she displays her charms in the ball-room; compared with that modest and retiring young woman, who, in her woollen cloak and miry shoes, is seen on a cold wintry day at the sick bed of the poor expiring mother, first reviving the sinking frame of the sufferer with the cordials she has prepared with her own hands, then dispensing bread to the clamorous hungry babes, then comforting the agitated mind of the departing wife with the consolations of religion, and, last of all, soothing the troubled breast of the distressed husband with the prospect of a country, where there shall be no more death?

Or what is the man of polished manners, insinuating address, sparkling wit, and endless anecdote, whose

society is courted, and who is the life of every company into which he enters; who every where receives the incense of praise, and the worship of admiration; I say, what is this man, in real grandeur, utility, and moral beauty of character, to the unassuming youth, who, though well educated and extensively read, and with a mind that could luxuriate in all the pleasures of literary pursuits, devotes a large portion of his time to the exercises of benevolence: who on a Sabbath journeys to some neighbouring village on foot, sustaining the storms of winter, and the sultry heats of summer, to teach a school of ignorant children, bound to him by no tie but that of our common nature, to read the word of God: who is often seen in the retired streets and alleys of his own town, checking the torrents of wickedness by the distribution of tracts, or the circulation of the Bible: who, when fatigued with business, would gladly seek the repose of home, or else, thirsting for knowledge, would fain converse with books; yet instead of this, devotes his evening hours to assist in managing the business of public institutions?

Need I ask which of these two is the most honourable character? They admit of no comparison. The wreath of literary fame, the laurel of the warrior, the tribute of praise offered to superior wit, are empty and worthless compared with the pure bright crown of the philanthropist. There is a time coming when the former shall be of no value in the eyes of their possessors, or the world; but the distinctions of superior beneficence belong to an order which shall be acknowledged in heaven, and shall be worn with unfading brilliancy through eternity.

I exhort, therefore, my children, that you do all the

good you can, both to the souls and bodies of your fellow-creatures: for this end, as I have already said, you were born into the world, and society has claims upon your attention, which you cannot neglect without disregarding the authority of God. Give your property for this purpose. Begin life with a conviction that every one ought to devote a fair portion of his worldly substance for the benefit of others. No man ought to set apart a less proportion of his income for the good of the public than a tenth; and this, in very many cases, is far too little. Whatever your estate may be, whether great or small, consider that it comes to you with a reserved claim of at least one-tenth for the public. Consider yourself as having a right to only nine-tenths. Pay tithes of all you possess to the cause of God and man. Be frugal in your general expenditure, that you may have the more to do good with. Waste not that upon unnecessary luxuries of dress or living, which thousands and millions want for necessary comfort and religious instruction. The noblest transformation of property is not into personal jewels, or splendid household furniture, or costly equipages; but into clothing for the naked, food for the hungry, medicine for the sick, knowledge for the ignorant, holiness for the vicious, salvation for the lost.

Give your influence, whatever it be, to the cause of the public. We have all a circle of influence, and it is more extensive than we imagine. We are all and always doing good or harm. Two persons never meet, however short the duration, or whatever be the cause of their interview, without exerting some influence upon each other. An important transaction, a casual hint, a studied address, each and all may become the means

of controlling the mind of those with whom we have to do. Let your influence be all thrown into the scale of the public good. Do your own duty, and endeavour to rouse others to do theirs.

Let your exertions in the public cause be the result of deliberate purpose, not of mere accident. Set yourselves to do good. Pursue a system, and do not act from caprice. Let not your zeal be a blaze at one time, and a mere spark at another. Study your situation, circumstances, talents, and let your benevolence flow through that channel which Providence has more especially opened before you. All are not fitted for, nor are they called to, the same work. In the division of the labour of mercy, occupy that station, and be content with that work, to which you are obviously destined. Avoid the disposition to be first in the front rank, or no where. This is selfishness, not benevolence; selfishness operating in the way of activity, instead of indolence; of giving, instead of hoarding. Be anxious to do good, though, like the ministering angels, your agency should never be seen, but only felt. Do not be discouraged by difficulty nor disheartened by ingratitude; seek your reward in the approbation of conscience, and the smile of God, not in the acknowledgments of men. Persevere to the end of life; and be not weary in well doing. Be diligent, for the world is dying around you, and you are dying with it. You are young: but you are mortal. Your time of working may be short, therefore strive to do much in a little time; for a man's life is to be measured not so much by the years that he lives, as by the work he does. You may die, but if you do good, your work lives; lives and multiplies its kind on earth, and then follows you to heaven, to live in your own

remembrance, and in the happiness of others through everlasting ages. "As therefore we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith: and let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

PRAYER.

O THOU who art plenteous in mercy, whose name and nature are love, the blessed God, and delighting to bless others, help me so to contemplate and admire thy boundless benevolence as to imitate it. Thou hast manifested and commended thy love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, thou didst give thy Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Marvellous and ineffable grace! By thy love, and by his agony and bloody sweat, his passion and his cross, I beseech thee, deliver me from the great sin of selfishness. O let me not be given up to this hateful vice. Grant me to be affected by the sins, the sorrows, and the necessities of others. Surrounded on every hand by such scenes of vice and misery, may I be inspired with the holy ambition to do all the good my means, abilities, and opportunities will enable me to accomplish. May I by thy grace aspire to the honour, and live the life, and perform the deeds of a Christian philanthropist. Make me an instrument of blessing to my species. Yet keep me from all pride, conceit, and vain glory; and when I have done all, may I confess I am an unprofitable servant, and still depend upon thy mercy, through Christ, for pardon and eternal life. Amen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FEMALE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, VIRTUES, AND PURSUITS.

As the perusal of this volume is intended for those who may be supposed to have finished, or are near the completion of the pursuits of school, all that can be designed in this chapter, is to follow up the object of a good education, which, most probably, it has been the felicity of many of my female readers to receive: or, in the opposite case, to correct the faults, and point out in what way to supply the defects of a bad one.

"A young lady may excel in speaking French and Italian, may repeat a few passages from a volume of extracts; play like a professor, and sing like a syren; have her dressing-room decorated with her own drawings, tables, stands, screens, and cabinets; nay, she may dance like Sempronia herself, and yet may have been very badly educated. I am far from meaning to set no value whatever on any or all of these qualifications; they are all of them elegant, and many of them properly tend to the perfecting of a polite education. These things in their measure and degree may be done, but there are others which should not be left undone. Many things are becoming, but 'one thing is needful.' Besides, as the world seems to be fully apprized of the value of whatever tends to embellish life, there is less occasion here to insist on its importance.

"But though a well-bred young lady may lawfully learn most of the fashionable arts, yet it does not seem to be the end of education to make women of fashion dancers, singers, players, painters, actresses, sculptors, gilders, varnishers, engravers, and embroiderers. Most men are commonly destined to some profession, and their minds are conse-

quently turned each to its respective object. Would it not be strange if they were called out to exercise their profession, or to set up their trade, with only a little general knowledge of the trades of other men, and without any previous definite application to their own peculiar calling? The profession of ladies, to which the bent of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families. They should be therefore trained with a view to these several conditions, and be furnished with a stock of ideas and principles, and qualifications and habits, ready to be applied and appropriated, as occasion may demand, to each of these respective situations; for though the arts which merely embellish life must claim admiration, yet when a man of sense comes to marry, it is a companion whom he wants, and not an artist. It is not merely a creature who can paint, and play, and dress, and dance; it is a being who can comfort and counsel him; one who can reason, and reflect, and feel, and judge, and discourse, and discriminate; one who can assist him in his affairs, lighten his cares, soothe his sorrows, purify his joys, strengthen his principles, and educate his children.'' Hannah More.

This is sound reasoning; it proceeds on the obvious and indisputable principle that the excellence of means is to be judged of by their adaptation to the end to be produced; and the value of an instrument to be appreciated by its fitness for the work contemplated. That is perfect female education which best prepares women for the station in society which Providence has destined them to occupy. And what is that station? To be wives, mothers, and mistresses. Think not that this is degrading woman below her just rank, or that such a station requires nothing more than an initiation into the mysteries of the kitchen, or a memory well stored with the responses of the "Cook's Oracle." If to be the suitable companion of a sensible man; the judicious mother of a rising family; the neat and orderly and frugal mistress of an extensive household; if to be qualified to counsel her husband in the intricacies of life, to soothe him in his troubles, to lighten his heart

of half its load of care, to enliven his solitude with the charm of her conversation, and render his home "the soft green," on which his weary spirit shall love to repose; if to be qualified to train up her children in the paths of religion, to form them to habits of virtue, to preside over their education, and the formation of their character, so as to multiply in them her own image of female excellence, and raise in each of them a duplicate of her lovely self; if to be qualified to render her house attractive, both to its stated inhabitants, and the friends who may occasionally resort to it; I say, if this be a low station, and fitness for it be nothing more than mean qualifications, where, in all this world, shall we find any one that is high, or noble, or useful.

For these sacred occupations has Providence destined the female sex, and say, what kind of education fits for such a scene of endearing and important duties! For such a circle of obligations, she should indeed be accomplished:

"No term however has been more abused than this. Accomplishment is a word that signifies completeness, perfection. But I may safely appeal to the observation of mankind, whether they do not meet with swarms of youthful females, issuing from our boarding schools, as well as emerging from the more private scenes of domestic education, who are introduced into the world under the broad and universal title of accomplished ladies, of whom it cannot very truly be pronounced, that they illustrate the definition, by a completeness which leaves nothing to be added, and a perfection which leaves nothing to be desired."

"This frenzy of accomplishments, unhappily, is no longer restricted within the usual limits of rank and of fortune; the middle orders have caught the contagion, and it rages downward with increasing violence, from the elegantly dressed but slenderly portioned curate's daughter, to the equally fashionable daughter of the little tradesman, and of the more opulent, but not more judicious farmer.

And is it not obvious, that as far as this epidemical mania has spread, this very valuable part of society is declining in usefulness, as it rises in its unlucky pretensions to elegance? And this revolution of the manners of the middle class has so far altered the character of the age, as to be in danger of rendering obsolete the heretofore common saying, 'that most worth and virtue are to be found in the middle station.' For I do not scruple to assert, that in general, as far as my observation has extended, this class of females, in what relates both to religious knowledge and to practical industry, falls short both of the very high and the very low. Their new course of education, and the habits of life, and elegance of dress, connected with it, peculiarly unfits them for the active duties of their own very important condition; while with frivolous eagerness and second-hand opportunities, they run to snatch a few of those showy acquirements which decorate the great. This is done apparently with one or other of these views; either to make their fortune by marriage, or if that fail, to qualify them to become teachers of others: hence the abundant multiplication of superficial wives, and of incompetent and illiterate governesses." Hannah More.

By accomplishments, I believe, are usually intended dancing, music, drawing, the languages, &c., &c. As for dancing, if it be allowable at all in a system of Christian education, it cannot be permitted to rise to a higher rank than that of mere physical training, which should be strictly confined to the school, and laid aside for ever when the school is quitted for home. In very many schools calisthenic exercises are substituted, with great advantage both to body and mind, for the evolutions of the dancing master.

Music has not the same objections. The acquisition of this pleasing science requires a vigorous exercise of that faculty of the mind which is the foundation of all knowledge, I mean attention; and therefore, like the mathematics, is valuable, not merely for its own sake, but as a part of mental education.*

* This, however, supposes that the pupil is really made to comprehend the theory of music as she goes on, and is made to play by

Besides this the ear is tuned by its Maker to harmony, and the concord of sweet sounds is a pleasant and innocent recreation. Music becomes sinful, only when too much time is occupied in acquiring the science, or when it is applied to demoralizing compositions. I am decidedly of opinion, that in general, far more time is occupied in this accomplishment than ought to be thus employed. Many pupils practise three, four, five hours a day. Now suppose four hours a day be thus spent, commencing from six years of age and continuing till eighteen, then, leaving out the Sundays, and allowing thirteen days annually for traveling, there will be fourteen thousand four hundred hours spent at the piano-forte, which, allowing ten hours a day for the time usually devoted to study, will make nearly four years out of twelve given to music. Can this be justified, my female friends, on any principle of reason or revelation? What ideas might have been acquired, what a stock of knowledge amassed, what habits of mental application formed in this time! And what renders this the more culpable is, that all this time is spent in acquiring a science which, as soon as its possessor is placed at the head of a family, is generally neglected if not forgotten. If it be really true, therefore, that music cannot be acquired without practising four hours a day I do not hesitate to say that the sacrifice is far too costly; and females should forego the accomplishment, rather than purchase it at such a

the notes, and not merely from memory. The ignorance of some teachers, and the indolence of others, deprive music of all its salutary power to strengthen the mind, and reduce it to the mere business of teaching a child to play a few tunes, which, bull-finch like, she has learned by rote.

rate. If the great design and chief excellence of the female character, were to make a figure for a few years in the drawing-room, to enliven the gay scene of fashionable resort, and, by the freshness of her charms, and the fascination of her accomplishments, to charm all hearts, and conquer one, then let females give all their precious hours till they can play like Orpheus, or sing like a syren; but if it be what I have already stated, then indeed it will sound like a meagre qualification for a wife, or a mother, to say, "She is an exquisite performer on the harp or piano."

Drawing, and all the fancy operations of the brush, the pencil, the needle, and the scissors, are innocent and agreeable, provided they are kept in the place of recreations, and are not suffered to rise into occupations. Of late years they have acquired a kind of hallowed connexion, and Fancy has been seen carrying her painted and embroidered productions to lay on the altar of Mercy and of Zeal. These things are sinful only when they consume too much time, and draw the mind from the love and pursuit of more important, or more necessary duties. They are little elegant trifles, which do well enough to fill up the interstices of time, but must not displace the more momentous objects which require and occupy its larger portions.

The Languages are accomplishments, for which there is a great demand in the system of modern education. I confess plainly, at once, that I rate the importance of French at a much lower value than many do. I believe not one in a hundred who pretend to learn it, ever derive very much advantage from it. The object of acquiring a foreign language is to converse with those who speak it, or to be as a key to all the literature which

it contains. To be able to hammer out a few sentences, ill pronounced, and worse constructed; to tell what a table, or a house, or a door is, or pass the usual compliments in French, is a miserable reward for years of dreaming or yawning over Levizac or Du Fief. If, then, you have begun French, or Italian, and still retain any thing of what you have learned, give a moderate portion of your time to recover what else will soon be utterly lost; for nothing is so soon lost from the mind as a little of a foreign language. Pursue the study till you can, at least, read it with nearly as much ease as your mother tongue. Perhaps the chief advantage from this accomplishment is, that it raises our reputation a little in elegant society, and so far increases our weight of character, and thus enlarges the sphere of our usefulness. The classic languages and even Hebrew, in addition to the living continental ones, may all be pursued if a young lady has time and taste for them.

On the subject of accomplishments, then, my views are sufficiently explicit. The greater part of them I by no means condemn. Custom has rendered them necessary, religion allows them to be innocent, and ingenuity can render them useful. Piety is not in a state of hostility against taste, and would not look more lovely in Gothic barbarity than in Grecian elegance. Provided she maintain all her sanctity, dignity, spirituality, and benevolence, she does not appear less inviting when attired by the Muses and attended by the Graces. Females may play, and sing, and draw, and write Latin, and speak Italian and French, provided the time, the money, and the admiration lavished on these external acquirements, be all within reasonable limits; provided also they are regarded as sources of private entertain-

ment, not as arts of public display; and as recreations from more severe and necessary pursuits, not as the chief end of education; and as the mere appendages of excellence, not its substitute.

It unfortunately happens, however, that the female who has in reality received the worst education, often makes the best figure in society. There are many schools which (to adopt a simile borrowed from the trades of my own town) instead of resembling the jeweller's workshop, where sterling gold and real diamonds are polished, are nothing more than gilders, varnishers, and platers, whose object is to give the brightest surface in the shortest time, and at the least expense. The paste and the gilt look very well, perhaps better than the gem and the gold, because more of them can be obtained for the same sum: but which will wear best, and last the longest? It requires much self-denial, much sturdy attachment to solid excellence and nobleness of mind, for a female of few accomplishments, but many virtues, to go home from a company, where some gilded varnished mind has received for her music or singing the tribute of admiration, and still to prefer the uncommanding excellence of character to all the fascinations of exterior decoration. But look onward in life. See the future career of both. The siren wins the heart, for which, as a prize, she has sung and played. She marries, and is placed at the head of a rising family. But, alas! the time she should have spent in preparing to be a companion to her husband, a mother to her children, a mistress to her servants, was employed at the piano, in qualifying her to charm the drawing-room circle. She succeeded, and had her reward, but it ended when she became a wife and a mother. She had neither good

sense, nor information; neither frugality, order, nor system; ability neither to govern her servants nor to guide her children; her husband sees every thing going wrong, and is dissatisfied; he caught the nightingale to which he listened with such transport in her native bower; but she is now a miserable-looking, moping, silent bird in her cage. All is discontent and wretchedness, for both at length find out that she was better qualified to be a public singer than a wife or a mother.

Far different is the case with the unostentatious individual of real moral worth. She too wins a heart more worth winning than the prize last spoken of. Some congenial mind, looking round for an individual who shall be a help-meet indeed, sees in her good sense and prudence, in her well-stored understanding, in her sobriety of manners, in her sterling piety, the virtues likely to last through life, with foliage ever verdant, fruit ever abundant. They are united: the hopes of rational unromantic lovers, founded on kindred minds and kindred hearts, are realized in all the fond endearments of wedded life. Although the first bloom and freshness of youthful affection fade away, its mellowness still remains, and mutual esteem still continues and grows. Their family increases, and she presides over it with the meekness of wisdom, the order of system, and the economy, not of meanness, but of prudence. To her children, whom her husband trusts with confidence to her care, she is the instructor of their minds, the guide of their youth. The father sees them rising up to prove the wisdom of his choice, when he selected a wife rather for virtues than accomplishments; their mother delights in a husband who is one with her in all her views, and approves of all her doings. They pass

through life together, blessing and being blessed; mutual comforters and mutual counsellors, often saying, if not singing,

> "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
> Of Paradise that has survived the Fall!
> Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,
> That reeling Goddess with the zoneless waist."

How true and how beautiful are the words of Solomon; "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

A beautiful comment on this lovely passage is to be found in the "Friend," by Coleridge, amongst some "Specimens of Rabbinical wisdom, selected from the Misna." It is entitled, "Whoso hath found a virtuous wife hath a greater treasure than costly pearls."

"Such a treasure had the celebrated teacher Rabbi Meir found. He sat during the whole of one Sabbath day in the public school, and instructed the people. During his absence from his house, his two sons died, both of them of uncommon beauty, and enlightened in the law. His wife bore them to her bedchamber, laid them upon the marriage-bed, and spread a white covering over their bodies. In the evening, Rabbi Meir came home. 'Where are my sons,' he asked, 'that I may give them my blessing?' 'They are gone to the school,' was the answer. 'I repeatedly looked round the school,' he replied, 'and I did not see them there.' She reached to him a goblet, he praised the Lord at the going out of the Sabbath, drank, and again asked, 'Where are my sons, that they too may drink of the cup of blessing? 'They will not be far off,' she said, and placed food before him that he might eat. He was in a gladsome and genial mood, and, when he had said grace after the meal, she thus addressed him: 'Rabbi, permit me one question.' 'Ask it then, my love,' he replied. 'A few days ago, a person instrusted some jewels to my custody, and now he demands them again; should I give them back to him?' 'This is a question,' said Rabbi Meir, 'which my wife should not have thought it necessary to ask. What! wouldst thou hesitate or be reluctant to restore to every one his own?' 'O no,' replied she, 'but I thought it best not to restore them without acquainting thee therewith.' She then led him to their chamber, and stepping to the bed, took the white covering from the dead bodies. 'Ah, my sons! my sons!' thus loudly lamented the father, 'my sons! the light of mine eyes, and the light of my understanding! I was your father, but ye were my teachers in the law!' The mother turned away, and wept bitterly. At length she took her husband by the hand, and said, 'Rabbi, didst thou not teach me that one must not be reluctant to restore that which was entrusted to our keeping? See, the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed be the name of the Lord!' echoed Rabbi Meir, 'and blessed be his name for thy sake too; for well is it written, Whoso hath found a virtuous wife hath a greater treasure than costly pearls: she opened her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.'"

My young female friends, have you no ambition to answer, in future life, these beautiful patterns of female excellence? Have you no desire, that if Providence should place you at the head of a family, you may shine

in all the mild radiance of domestic, feminine excellence? And are there not, as you read, some spirit-stirring desires in your soul? Does not all the glitter of mere external accomplishments fade away into darkness before such effulgent virtue? Does not all the painted insignificance of mere drawing-room charms dwindle into nothing before that solid excellence which is a "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets." If so, and ye would thus bless and be blessed, make up your mind deliberately to this opinion, and abide by it, that what is useful is infinitely to be preferred to what is dazzling; and virtuous excellence to be more ardently coveted than fashionable accomplishments. A right aim is of unspeakable consequence. Whatever we propose as our grand paramount object will form our character. We shall subordinate every thing else to it; and be this your aim, to excel rather in solid and useful attainments, than in external showy decorations.

Seek a large portion of what is usually denominated good sense. It is very difficult to define what I mean, and perhaps it is not necessary, for every one knows what I intend, by this quality. It is that sobriety of character, that quick perception of all the proprieties of life, that nice discernment of what is best to be done in all the ordinary circumstances of human society, which will enable us to act with credit to ourselves, and comfort to others. It is a thoughtful, cautious way of judging and acting, and is equally opposed to that rashness which acts with precipitancy, and that ignorance which cannot act at all. It is, in fact, prudence, accommodating itself to all the relations of life, and the ever-varying circumstances of society.

Store your mind with useful information. Read

much, and let your reading be of a right kind. Reject with disdain, as you ought, the libel which has been circulated by some against your understanding, that poetry and novels are the books most adapted to the understanding and feelings of young ladies. On this topic I refer you to the chapter on books, and may here mention in addition to those I have already enumerated, Mrs Hannah More's Strictures on Female Education, and Mrs Ellis's works.

Thus would I have a female qualified for her station as a wife, mother, and mistress of a family; but this is not all; for mental improvement should be associated with a correct knowledge of household affairs. She who is to preside over a family should be most intimately acquainted with every thing that can preserve its order, or promote its comfort. She must be a most injudicious mother, who is not anxious to teach a daughter how to manage a family to the greatest advantage; and she must be a weak and silly girl, who is not willing to be taught. All the day, therefore, must not be given to books; for learned ladies, without neatness, without order, without economy, without frugality, "may do very well for maidens or aunts, but believe me they'll never make wives." A husband's home should be rendered comfortable for himself and his children, or else they are both very likely to wander from home for comfort. Cleanliness, neatness, frugality, order, are all of great importance in the habits of a wife, mother, and mistress, and no knowledge, however profound or extensive, can be a substitute for them. It is not at all requisite that a wife should be either an accomplished housemaid, or a perfect cook, but she ought to be able to judge of the

qualifications of her servant; and the want of this ability has led many a man with a learned wife, to exclaim, with something between disgust and despair, "I now find, to my cost, that knowledge alone is as poor a qualification for a wife, as personal beauty or external accomplishments."

Before I close this chapter, I must mention one or two dispositions, which young females should assiduously cherish, and unostentatiously exhibit.

The first is filial obedience; not that this is binding upon daughters only, for what son is he that honours not, loves not, comforts not, his father and his mother? Wherever Providence should cast his lot, or in whatever circumstances he should be placed, let him continue in every possible way to promote the happiness of his parents. Young people are but too apt to think, that the obligations to filial piety diminish in number and strength, as years increase. I am afraid, that really one of the signs of the times, and it is no bright one, is the decrease of this amiable and lovely virtue. I think I see rising, I wish I may be in error, a spirit of independence, which is aiming to antedate the period of manhood, and to bring as near to fourteen as possible, the time when the yoke of parental control may be thrown off. This is neither for the comfort of the parents, nor the advantage of the children. It is not obedience only that should not be refused, (for where this is denied, there can be neither religion nor virtue;) but all those ways of showing them honour in public and all those ways of promoting their comfort in private, for which opportunities are constantly presented. There is no period in the life of a father or mother, when obligation ceases to be in some measure subject to them, and

in all respects to promote their happiness. It has been brought as an allegation against the bard whom an Englishman might be proud to name, that he was so severe a father, as to have compelled his daughters, after he was blind, to read aloud to him, for his sole pleasure, Greek and Latin authors, of which they did not understand a word. Compelled his daughters! What daughters must they have been to compulsion in such a case!

The following is the description of a daughter which I have somewhere met with:

"M. E. S. received her unhappy existence at the price of her mother's life, and at the age of seventeen she followed, as the sole mourner, the bier of her remaining parent. From her thirteenth year, she had passed her life at her father's sick bed, the gout having deprived him of the use of his limbs, and beheld the arch of heaven only when she went forth to fetch food or medicines. The discharge of her filial duties occupied the whole of her time and all her thoughts. She was his only nurse, and for the last two years they lived without a servant. She prepared his scanty meal, she bathed his aching limbs, and, though weak and delicate from constant confinement, and the poison of melancholy thoughts, she had acquired an unusual power in her arms, from the habit of lifting her old and suffering father out of and into his bed of pain. Thus passed away her early youth in sorrow; she grew up in tears, a stranger to the amusements of youth, and its more delightful schemes and imaginations. She was not, however, unhappy; she attributed no merit to herself for her virtues; but for that reason were they more her reward. 'The peace which passeth all understanding,' disclosed itself in all her looks and movements. It lay on her countenance like a steady unshadowed moonlight; and her voice, which was at once naturally sweet and subtile, came from her like the fine flute tones of a masterly performer, which, still floating at some uncertain distance, seem to be created by the player rather than to proceed from the instrument. If you had listened to it in one of those brief sabbaths of the soul, when the activity and discursiveness of the thoughts are suspended, and the mind quietly eddies round instead of flowing onward (as at late evening in the spring, I have

seen a bat wheel in silent circles round and round a fruit tree in full blossom, in the midst of which, as within a close tent of the purest white, an unseen nightingale was piping its sweetest notes,) in such a mood, you might have half fancied, half felt, that her voice had a separate being of its own, that it was a living something whose mode of existence was for the ear only: so deep was her resignation, so entirely had it become the habit of her nature, and in all she did or said so perfectly were her movements and her utterance without effort, and without the appearance of effort. Her dying father's last words, addressed to the clergyman who attended him, were his grateful testimony, that during his long and sore trial, his good Maria had behaved to him like an angel; that the most disagreeable offices, and the least suited to her age and sex, had never drawn an unwilling look from her; and that whenever his eye had met hers, he had been sure to see in it either the tear of pity, or the sudden smile expressive of her affection and wish to cheer him. 'God,' said he, 'will reward the good girl for all her long dutifulness to me!' He departed during the inward prayer, which followed these his last words. His wish will be fulfilled in eternity!"

What daughter can read this and not admire, and if need be imitate, the conduct of Maria? Few are called to these self-denying acts of filial piety; but who would not do all they could to sweeten, as far as may be, the dregs of life to an aged mother, or a blind father? It has been observed, that a good daughter generally makes an exemplary wife and mother.

Sensibility, when blended with a sound judgment, and guided in its exercises by good sense and prudence, is a lovely ornament of the female character. By sensibility I mean a susceptibility of having emotion excited by external objects; a habit of mind in which the affections are easily moved by objects calculated and worthy to produce feeling. Of course, this is an evil or an excellence, according as it is united with other mental habits. Excess of sensibility is one of the most injurious ingredients which can enter into the formation

of character. Where it is united with a weak judgment, and a wild imagination, it exposes its possessor to the greatest possible dangers, and opens in her bosom a perpetual source of vexation, misery, and self-torment. If we were to trace to their source many of those quarrels which have alienated friends, and made irreconcileable enemies; those mortifications of pride and vanity which have ended in lunacy; those hasty and imprudent marriages which have terminated in universal wretchedness; those acts of profligacy, suicide, and even murder, which have stained the annals of mankind; we should find the germs of all these mischiefs in an excess of morbid sensibility. Feeling, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master: a source of comfort, and a means of usefulness, if well governed; but if left to rage without control an engine of destruction, and a cause of misery. Every heart should have an altar, on which this fire should be perpetually kept burning, but then prudence should ever be on the watch, lest it should consume the temple.

Young females are in imminent danger of being led away by the representation, that an unfeeling woman, though she be pure as a statue of Parian marble, yet withal, if she be as cold, is a most unlovely character. This I admit, and therefore I class a well-governed sensibility amongst the decorations of the female character. But then, the tendency of this remark is certainly mischievous, since, according to the spirit in which it is usually both made and received, it means, that an excess of feeling rather adorns than injures the character. It will be found, generally speaking, that young people rather force the growth, than check the luxuriance, of their feelings; which is just in the inverted order of

nature, since the affections generally grow without culture, the judgment scarcely ever. The voice of flattery also is all on the side of feeling. A warm-hearted girl, carried away by her feelings, and misled by a wild and ardent imagination, will find many more admirers than a sensible prudent and reserved one: and for this plain reason, because there are more fools in the world than wise men. Follow out the history of the two characters. It is the end that proves all.*

Imprudent attachments, rash friendships, misdirected anxieties, eccentric charities, fickle schemes, groundless anticipations, mortifying disappointments, harassing litigations, with inumerable other evils, come in the train of excessive and ungoverned sensibility. Let young women therefore remember, that the understanding is the queen amongst the faculties of the soul, beneath whose despotic sway, the imagination and affections may be as active and as ardent as they please, so that they never offend against the laws of their sovereign.

With these limitations, I will admit that sensibility is an ornament of female character. A cold, unfeeling, heartless woman, who has no tear for sorrow, no smile for excellence; who has no power but that of niggardly calculation, and no emotions but those which, by a sort of centripetal force, are all drawn to self as the centre of gravity, is a libel upon her sex. She may have prudence, but it is likely to degenerate into cunning; frugality, but it will in all probability soon become avarice; caution, but it will be changed into suspicion; intellect, but it will be proud, censorious, and cynical. Pure sensibility is the soil in which the generous affections grow: it cherishes that mercy which is full of good

* See Mrs. Hannah More.

fruits; gives birth to all the enterprises of benevolence, and when touched and purified with a "live coal from the altar" will give a keener taste for the spirit of religion, a richer enjoyment of its privileges, and a quicker zeal in discharging its duties: but then it must be feeling associated with principle, and guided in all its exercises by a sound judgment.

Retiredness of disposition is also an exquisite ornament of the female character. Even the most distant approach to anything forward in manner, or vain in conversation, should be most studiously avoided. Delicate reserve, without awkward bashfulness, is no small part of the loveliness of every young female; especially in all her conduct towards the opposite sex. A lady who takes pains to be noticed, generally gains her object without its reward: for she is noticed but at the same time she is despised. Nothing can be more disgusting than a bold obtrusiveness of manners in a female, except it be that affectation of retiredness which retreats only to be followed. Flippancy and pertness are sometimes mistakenly substituted by their possessor for smartness and cleverness. These latter qualities never look well when they are studied; they are never tolerable but when they are natural; and are amongst the last things which we should seek to acquire: for when obtained in this way they appear no better than ornaments stuck on, instead of being wrought in. I am not contending against that ease of manners which the most retiring female may and should adopt, even in the company of gentlemen; that artless and elegant freedom which is compatible with the most delicate reserve; but against that obtrusive mode of address, which determines to attract attention.

A love of display has been thought to be amongst the blemishes which usually attach to female character in general. I do not now refer to the petty concerns of dress, for this is truly pitiable, and an individual silly enough to indulge such a butterfly, peacock taste as this, is too weak to afford any rational hopes of having her follies corrected. Arguments are lost upon that little mind whose ambition cannot comprehend, or value, or covet, a distinction of greater worth than a richer silk, a more graceful plume, or a more modern fashion. This Lilliputian heroine, armed at every point with feathers, flowers, and ribbons; supported by all her auxiliary forces of plumassiers, frisseurs, milliners, mantua makers, perfumers, &c., &c., contending for the palm of victory, on the arena of fashion, must be left to her fate, to conquer or to fall: I have no concern with her. But there is vanity of another kind, against which I would caution young females, and that is a fondness for exhibiting their fashionable accomplishments or mental acquirements. Pedantry in a man is bad enough, but in a woman is still worse. Few things are more offensive than to see a female labouring to the uttermost to convince a company that she has received a good intellectual education, has improved her advantages, and is really a sensible, clever woman; at one time vociferating about nitrogen, oxygen, and caloric; then boasting her acquaintance with some of the greatest geniuses of the age; and last of all entering into a stormy debate on politics or finance.

Now observe, I am not contending against a woman's acquainting herself with these subjects, for I reject with indignation the calumny that the female mind is unequal to the profoundest subjects of human investigation,

or should be restricted in its studies to more feminine pursuits; much less am I anxious to exclude the stores of female intellect, and the music of female tongues, from the feast of reason and the flow of soul. No. Too long have the softer sex been insulted by the supposition, that they are incapable of joining or enriching mental communion or conversation in a drawing-room. I most unequivocally, unhesitatingly say, that they have a much smaller share of conversational intercourse than their natural talents, and their acquired information, entitle them to.

All I am contending against is that love of display which leads some to force themselves upon the attention of any company they are in; which is not contented with sharing, but is ambitious of monopolizing the conversation. Some silversmiths and jewellers who wish to attract public attention make a splendid display of gems and jewels in their window; but it contains their whole stock, they have no store besides: there are others, who, while making a proper exhibition in their shop, can conduct their customers from room to room within it, each filled with stores of inestimable value. Not unlike the former, some persons make a grand display in conversation, but their tongue, like the shop window, exhibits all they possess, they have very little besides in their minds: but there are others who, like the latter tradesmen, are not deficient in respectable display, and, besides the ideas which they exhibit in conversation, have a valuable stock of knowledge in their minds.

To conclude this long chapter, I must again remind you that true religion is the deep basis of excellence; sound morality its lofty superstructure; good sense,

general knowledge, correct feeling, the necessary furniture of the fabric; and unaffected modesty and fashionable accomplishments its elegant decorations.

PRAYER.

Gracious and glorious Lord God, aid me by thy Holy Spirit in all my approaches to thy throne, that I may sincerely worship thee, and worthily magnify thy name. Forgive the sins and follies of my youth. Alas, how much of vanity and levity have I to confess and bewail. May the time past of my life more than suffice for these things, and may I now begin better to understand, and more constantly and practically to remember, the true end of life. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. Teach me the true dignity of my sex. May I early distinguish between genuine excellence and its mere showy resemblances. Grant me thy grace, that I may become a real Christian, and a lover and follower of all bright examples of female piety. Grant me prudence without coldness, and cheerfulness without lightness. Endow me with every grace and virtue that will qualify me for whatever situation I may be called to occupy in future life. Preserve me from the love of display, which is but too common, and help me to be modest, humble, and retiring. May I, in my proper sphere, be active in doing good. Hear me, for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRUDENCE, MODESTY, AND COURTESY.

Religion, my dear children, is the first and the principal thing which I am anxious that you should possess, but it is not the only one. It is the basis of excellence which should be well laid, to bear whatsoever things are lovely, or of good report; or, changing the metaphor, it is the firmness and solidity of character, which, like the substance of the diamond, best prepares it to receive a polish, and is rendered more beautiful and more valuable by being polished. The religion of some persons is like a gem in the rough, the excellence of which is concealed and disfigured by many foreign adhesions: there is real principle at the bottom, but it is so surrounded by imprudence, rudeness, ignorance, slovenliness, and other bad qualities, that it requires a skilful eye to discern its worth. I most earnestly admonish you, therefore, to add to your piety,

1. Prudence. By prudence, I mean a calculating and deliberative turn of mind as to the tendency of words and actions; coupled with a desire so to speak and act as to bring no inconvenience either upon ourselves or others. It is the right application of knowledge in practice which constitutes wisdom. A person

may have immense knowledge, with scarcely a grain of prudence; and, notwithstanding the stores of his understanding, may always have his peace destroyed. I am aware that prudence is too often regarded by the ardent and sanguine minds of the young as a cold and heartless virtue; a sort of November flower, which, though regular in its growth and elegant in its form, has neither glow nor fragrance, but stands alone in the garden as a memorial of departed summer, a harbinger of approaching winter. Youth are captivated by what is frank and generous, even when it leads to "Headlong Hall." If by prudence I meant mere cold reserve, or that selfishness which chills the ardour of kindness, and freezes the spring of benevolence in the heart, you might well beware of a disposition so unlovely; but I simply mean a habit of thinking before you speak or act, lest your thoughtlessness should prove injurious to the comfort of your own mind, or the peace of others; I only require you to exercise that judgment upon the tendencies of your conduct which is one of the chief distinctions of a rational creature; I merely call upon you to put forth the power of foresight which God has planted in your nature; and surely, surely, there is nothing in this unsuited either to your age, or to the most generous mind. A rashness of speech, or of conduct, which is always involving a person, and his friends too, in difficulties, inconveniences, and embarrassments, has little to commend itself to your admiration, with whatever good temper or gay fancy it may happen to be associated; for society must be a chaos if all its members were formed upon this model.

You must have seen the mischiefs which imprudence has brought in its train. What strifes have been en-

gendered by a rash, unguarded use of the tongue; by persons giving a hasty opinion of the character, conduct, and motives of others. I believe that half the quarrels which take place, may be traced up to this source. If then you would journey along through life in honour and in peace, I cannot give you a more important piece of advice than this: Be very cautious how you give an opinion of the character, conduct or motives of others. Be slow to speak. For one that has repented of having held his tongue, myriads have bitterly grieved over the imprudent use of it. Remember what Solomon says, "A prating fool shall fall;" and almost all fools do prate: silence is generally a characteristic of wise men, especially in reference to the concerns of others. I know not a surer mark of a little, empty mind, than to be always talking about our neighbours' affairs. A collector of rags is a much more honourable, and certainly a far more useful, member of society than a collector and vender of tales.

But let your prudence manifest itself in reference to your conduct, as well as to your words. Never act till you have deliberated. Some persons invert the order of nature and reason; they act first, and think afterwards; and the consequence very generally proves, as might have been expected, that first impressions are fallacious guides to wise actions. I scarcely know any thing against which young people should be more seriously warned than this habit of acting upon first impressions; nor any thing which they should be more earnestly advised to cultivate than a propensity to look forward, and to consider the probable results of any proposed line of conduct. This calculating temper is far to be preferred to an impulsive character however generous;

for it will preserve the peace both of its possessor, and of those who have to do with him. Multitudes, by a want of prudence in the management of their pecuniary affairs, have ruined themselves, plunged their families into want, and involved their friends in calamity. They have engaged in one rash speculation after another; and formed one unpromising connection after another; having scarcely recovered from the complicated mischief of one, before they were involved in the embarrassment of the next, till the final catastrophe came in all its terrors, as might have been foreseen, and was predicted by every one except the rash projector himself. When we consider that in such cases a man cannot suffer alone, but must extend the effects of his conduct to others, prudence will appear to be not only an ornament of character but a virtue; and imprudence not only near to immorality but a part of it.

Begin life, then, with a systematic effort to cultivate a habit of sound discretion and prudent foresight: and for this purpose observe attentively the conduct of others; profit both by the sufferings of the rash, and the success of the cautious: render also your own past experience subservient to future improvement. I knew a person, who having imprudently engaged in a litigation which cost him a considerable sum of money before it could be compromised, made the following entry in his diary: "Paid this day one hundred and fifty pounds for wisdom." Experience, it has been said, keeps a dear school: but some people will not learn in any other, and they are fortunate who improve in this. I most emphatically recommend to you the diligent study of the book of Proverbs, as containing more sound wisdom, and more prudent maxims for the right govern-

ment of our affairs in this life, than all other books in the world put together.

2. Modesty is a very bright ornament of the youthful character: without it the greatest attainments and the strongest genius cannot fail to create disgust. Conceit I have already stated to be one of the obstacles to youthful piety, and even where its mischief does not operate so fatally as this, it certainly disfigures religion. Young people should consider, that even if they have much knowledge, they have but little experience. Every thing pert, flippant, obtrusive, and self-confident, is highly unbecoming in those who, whatever they may have of school learning, have but little acquaintance either with themselves or mankind. Strong intellects and great attainments will soon commend themselves, without any pains being taken to force them upon our attention; and they never appear so lovely, nor attract with such force, as when seen through a veil of modesty. Like the coy violet, which discloses its retreat rather by its fragrance than by its colour, youthful excellence should modestly leave others to find out its concealment, and not ostentatiously thrust itself on public attention. I do not wish to inculcate that diffidence which makes young people bashful and timid, even to awkwardness and sheepishness; which prevents even the laudable exertion of their powers; and which is not only distressing to the subjects of it themselves, but painful to others. Nothing can be further from my views than this; for it is a positive misery to be able neither to speak nor be spoken to without blushing to the ears, and trembling to the very toes: but there is a wide difference between this bashfulness and genuine modesty.

"Modesty is a habit or principle of the mind, which leads a man to form an humble estimate of himself, and prevents him from ostentatiously displaying his attainments before others; bashfulness is merely a state of timid feeling; modesty discovers itself in the absence of every thing assuming, whether in look, word, or action; bashfulness betrays itself by a downcast look, a blushing cheek, a timid air; modesty, though opposed to assurance, is not incompatible with an unpretending confidence in ourselves; bashfulness altogether unmans us, and disqualifies us for our duty."

Modesty shields a man from the mortifications and disappointments which assail the self-conceited man from every quarter. A pert, pragmatical youth, fond alike of exalting himself and depreciating others, soon becomes a mark for the arrows of ridicule, censure, and anger; while a modest person conciliates the esteem of all, not excepting his enemies and rivals; he disarms the resentment even of those who feel themselves most injured by his superiority; he makes all pleased with him by making them at ease with themselves; he is at once esteemed for his talents, and loved for the humility with which he bears them. Arrogance can neither supply the want of talents, nor adorn them where they are possessed.

It is of importance to cultivate modesty in youth, for if wanting then it is seldom obtained afterwards. Nothing grows faster than conceit; and as no weed in the human heart becomes more rank, so none is more offensive than this. I have known individuals, who, by their extensive information and strong sense, might have become the delight of every circle in which they moved, have yet by their positive, dogmatical, and overbearing temper, inspired such a dread that their arrival in company has thrown a cloud-shadow on every countenance. A disputatious temper is exceedingly to be dreaded.

Nothing can be more opposed to the peace of society than that disposition, which converts every room into the arena of controversy, every company into competitors, and every diversity of sentiment into an apple of discord. There are times when a man must state and defend his own opinions; when he cannot be silent, when he must not only defend but attack: but even in such cases he should avoid every thing dogmatical and overbearing; all insulting contempt of others, and all that most irritating treatment, which makes an antagonist appear like a fool. Our arguments should not fall and explode with the noise and violence of thunderbolts, but insinuate themselves like the light or the dew of heaven.

Take it as the result of more than half a century's observation and experience in no contracted circle of human life that controversy in company produces very little good, and a great deal of harm. In such a situation men contend for victory, not for truth; and each goes into the war of words, determined to avoid, if possible, the disgrace of a public defeat.

3. Courtesy is a most valuable disposition. This is enjoined not only by those authors who are the legislators of the drawing-room, but by him who has published laws for the government of the heart. "Be courteous," saith the word of God. By courtesy, I mean that benevolence of disposition which displays itself in a constant aim to please those with whom we associate, both by the matter and manner of our actions; in little things as well as great ones. Crabbe, in his English Synonyms, has given us this definition of courtesy and complaisance:

"Courteous in one respect comprehends more than complaisant;

it includes the manner, as well as the action; it is, properly speaking, polished complaisance: on the other hand complaisance includes more of the disposition in it than courteousness: it has less of the polish, but more of the reality of kindness. Courteousness displays itself in the address and the manners; complaisance in direct good offices; courteousness is most suitable for strangers; complaisance for friends, or the nearest relatives: among well-bred men, and men of rank, it is an invariable rule to address each courteously on all occasions whenever they meet, whether acquainted or otherwise; there is a degree of complaisance due between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and members of the same family, which cannot be neglected without endangering the harmony of their intercourse."

It is my earnest desire, my children, that you should be both courteous and complaisant. The union of both these constitutes true politeness. I do not wish you to study the works of Lord Chesterfield, which have been aptly described as teaching the manners of a dancing-master, and the morals of a prostitute: but true politeness, such as consists of the union I have already mentioned, is excellence carried to its highest polish.

Life is made up for the most part of petty transactions, and is chequered more by the light and shade of minor pains and pleasures, than by the deeper hues of miseries and ecstasies. Occasions rarely happen, when we can relieve or be relieved by the more splendid efforts of benevolence; while not a day, scarcely an hour, passes without an opportunity of giving or receiving gratifications of complaisance.

"Politeness," says our great essayist, in the Rambler, "is one of those advantages which we never estimate rightly but by the inconvenience of its loss. Its influence upon the manners is constant and uniform, so that like an equal motion it escapes perception. The circumstances of every action are so adjusted to each other, that we do not see where any error could have been committed, and rather acquiesce in its propriety, than admire its exactness. Wisdom and virtue are by no means sufficient, without the supplemental

laws of good breeding, to secure freedom from degenerating into rudeness, or self-esteem from swelling into insolence; a thousand incivilities may be committed, and a thousand offices neglected, without any remorse of conscience, or reproach from reason.

"The true effect of genuine politeness seems to be rather ease than pleasure. The power of delighting must be conferred by nature, and cannot be delivered by precept, or obtained by imitation; but though it be the privilege of few to ravish and to charm, every man may hope by rules and cautions not to give pain, and may therefore, by the help of good breeding, enjoy the kindness of mankind, though he should have no claim to higher distinctions.

"The universal axiom in which all complaisance is included, and from which flow all the formalities that custom has established in civilized nations, is, That no man shall give any preference to himself; a rule so comprehensive and certain, that perhaps it is not easy for the mind to imagine an incivility, without supposing it to be broken."

Think not, however, that politeness is only to be acquired by frequenting what is called fashionable company, and places of public entertainment; complaisance is the offspring of benevolence, the daughter of kindness: and may be found in the cottage, where I have often seen as much real courtesy as ever graced a mansion. Hear the testimony of Dr. Johnson on this subject.

"I have indeed not found among any part of mankind less real and rational complaisance, than among those who have passed their time in paying and receiving visits, in frequenting public entertainments, in studying the exact measures of ceremony, and in watching all the variations of fashionable courtesy.

"They know indeed at what hour they may be at the door of an acquaintance, how many steps they must attend him towards the gate, and what interval should pass before his visit is returned; but seldom extend their care beyond the exterior and unessential parts of civility, nor refuse their own vanity any gratification, however expensive to the quiet of another."

By a neglect of complaisance, many persons of substantial excellence have deprived their virtues of much

of their lustre, and themselves of much kindness: and it is very common to have it said of them, "Yes, he is a good man, but I cannot like him." Surely such persons, by an ill economy of reputation, have sold the attachment of the world at too low a price, since they have lost one of the rewards of virtue, without even gaining the profits of wickedness.

4. On admiration of the characters of others I think it important to say a few things. To observe, admire, and imitate the excellences of those around us, is no less our duty than our interest. It is a just tribute to their moral worth, and the means of promoting our own. It is of great consequence, however, that our admiration of character should be well directed: for as we naturally imitate what we admire, we should take care that we are attracted and charmed only by real excellence. Do not be led astray by a mere speciousness or showiness of character. Let nothing be regarded by you as worthy your admiration which is not in connexion with moral worth. Courage, frankness, heroism, politeness, intellect, are all valuable; but unless they are united with genuine principle and true integrity, they only render their possessor more dangerous, and invest him with greater power to do mischief. Suffer not your imagination to be captivated by the dazzling properties of a character the substantial parts of which are not approved by your judgment: nothing is excellent which is not morally so. The polished rake, the generous profligate, the witty and intelligent sceptic, are to be shunned as serpents whose variegated and beautiful skin would have no power to reconcile us to their venom. You may be charged with want of taste, or coldness of heart, for withholding your appro-

bation; but it is a far sublimer attainment, and certainly a more difficult one, to have taste and ardour only for the cause of holiness. Be cautious to examine every character which is presented to you for admiration; to penetrate the varnish of exterior accomplishments, and if you find nothing of genuine integrity beneath it, withhold the tribute of your approbation, regardless of the sneers of those shallow minds, which have neither the power to try the things that differ, nor the virtue to approve only such as are excellent.

It is a very important hint to give to young people just setting out in life, to analyse character before they admire it; remembering that, to borrow an allusion from chemistry, a deadly poison may be held in solution by the most beautifully-coloured liquid which the eye can behold.

5. An extreme dread of singularity, arising out of a morbid sensibility to shame, is a dangerous disposition of mind, to which young people are very liable. There are some who are so ambitious to be thought originals, that they affect distinction in folly, or even in vice: they can even bear to be laughed at, if it may be admitted that they are without a prototype: and are content to be persecuted, provided it be for originality. These martyrs to singularity are in one extreme, but its opposite is more common, that great dread of being ridiculed as singular which tries a man's attachment even to the cause of virtue. There are some so acutely, so morbidly sensible to the least sneer, that they are in dreadful peril of forsaking the cause of righteousness and morality, rather than take up the cross in the face of laughter. I have already in part considered this, and stated it to be one of the obstacles

to early piety: but it not only obstructs the entrance, but the subsequent path of piety, and should therefore be most vigorously opposed by all who are subject to its influence. A sense of shame when felt in reference to what is wrong is one of the guardians of virtue: in this meaning of the phrase, it can never be too acute, nor can it be too delicately susceptible of impression. When any one has ceased to be ashamed of doing what is wrong, and the last blush with which a tender conscience once suffused the countenance has vanished, the progress of sin is nearly completed, and the sinner may be considered as near the end of his career. But when a person is so morbidly sensible to ridicule, that he shrinks from it, even in the performance of that which is right, he not only lets down his dignity, but endangers his principles.

There is something noble and heroic in that disposition, which can dare to be singular in the cause of religion and morality; which, with a mind conscious of doing right, can fight, single-handed, the battles of the Lord against the host of scorners by which it may be surrounded. It is not a part of virtue to be indifferent to the opinion of others, except that opinion be opposed to the principles of truth and holiness, then it is the very height of virtue to act above it, and against it.

Ridicule is certainly not the test of truth, but it is one of the most fiery ordeals of that courage by which the truth is professed and supported. Many have been vanquished by scorn, who were invulnerable to rage; for men in general would much rather have their hearts reproached than their heads, deeming it less disgraceful to be weak in virtue than deficient in intellect. Strange perversion, the effect of that pride which, being injected

into our nature by the venom of the serpent in Paradise, still continues to infect and destroy us! Let us oppose this working of evil within us, and crucify this affection and lust of the flesh. Let no ridicule deter us from doing what is right or avoiding what is wrong. Let us emulate the sublime example of the apostle, who exclaimed, "We are fools for Christ's sake." This is the noblest effort of human courage, the loftiest achievement of virtue to be "faithful found among the faithless," and willing to bear any contumely rather than act in opposition to the convictions of our judgment, and the dictates of our conscience. It is infinitely better to be scorned for doing what is right, than applauded for doing what is wrong. From the laughter of the wicked you may find a refuge in the approbation of your conscience, and the smile of your God; but in what a miserable situation is that poor cowardly wretch, whose dread of singularity has led him to sacrifice the convictions of his conscience, and who has nothing to comfort him under the frowns of Deity but the applause of fools!

Neither in little things, nor in great ones, suffer your dread of singularity to turn your feet from the path of integrity. Arm yourselves with this mind, to do what is right, though you can find neither companion nor follower.

PRAYER.

O thou that lovest, commandest, and givest whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, aid me by thy grace, that I may add to the beauties of holiness the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Help

me to avoid all pride, vanity, and self-conceit. May I be prudent both in speech and action. Give me a thoughtful disposition. May I set a guard upon my lips, and be slow to speak, but swift to hear, ever prone to listen to the counsels of wisdom and the experience of age. May I be courteous, pitiful, and kind. Enable me to attain to distinguished excellence, and yet to cover all with a transparent veil of modesty. Give me much moral courage, and deliver me from false shame. May I have the substance of virtue adorned with the polish of true politeness. Endow me with every gift that will help me to give happiness and to be useful. Amen.

CHAPTER XX.

THE REDEMPTION OF TIME.

It was a very important admonition which St. Paul delivered to the Ephesian church, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The context in which it stands is equally striking: he had just admonished those to whom he wrote not to walk as fools; thus implying that a man can give no greater proof of folly, nor more effectually act the part of a fool, than to waste his time: while on the other hand, a just appreciation and right improvement of time are among the brighter displays of true wisdom.

Seneca observed that we are all of us complaining of the shortness of time, and yet have much more than we know what to do with. We are always mourning that our days are few, and yet acting as though there would be no end of them. This plainly proves that we neither value time correctly, nor improve it diligently. The Rev. Henry Martyn was known at the University by the designation of "The man who never wasted an hour." Nothing can better explain what I mean by improving time; it is never wasting it, but always appropriating it to some useful purpose. Many considerations, my children, urge this upon us.

It is the most precious thing in the world. In the bestowment of it, God differs from the manner in which he distributes most of his other gifts; in the latter he is profuse, in the former parsimonious. He can, of course, give us but a moment at a time, but that he does without ever promising another; as if to teach us highly to value, and diligently to improve the present moment, by the consideration, that for aught we know it may be our last.

Time, when once gone, never returns. Where is yesterday? "With the ages beyond the flood," and we can as soon hope to bring back one as the other. We talk of fetching up a lost hour, but the thing is impossible. A moment once lost is lost for ever; we could as rationally set out to find a sound that had expired in air as to find a lost moment. We may as well attempt to crowd two hours in the duration of one, as the employment of two hours into one; for, in reality, what we do in any given portion of time might have been done in it, although we had not wasted the preceding one.

How much there is of our time which can be applied to no purpose, except preparing us for improving other portions of our existence! How much goes away in sleep, and in all the other demands of nature for its refreshment and invigoration: this is not lost, if the subsequent periods be rightly applied and diligently employed, any more than the time spent in oiling the wheels of a carriage impedes the journey, because the vehicle goes the faster afterwards. But then if we sleep at night, it is that we may be busy in the day; if we eat and drink, it is that we may be better able to work; and certainly a recollection of the great portion of our

time that is necessary for refreshment and repose, should be a stimulus to us to employ the remainder with the greater diligence. We should regard it as an infirmity of nature, that so much sleep and time for eating and drinking is necessary, and endeavour by diligence in our waking working hours, to improve the surplus.

Then add to this the portions of time which are irresistibly engrossed by the tyranny of custom; all that passes in regulating the superficial decorations of life, or is given up to the disposal of others in the reciprocations of civility; all that is torn from us by the violence of disease, or stolen imperceptibly away by lassitude and languor: that large portion which is spent amidst the toys of childhood, and afterwards amidst the imbecility of old age:* I say, add up these things, and when you have substracted the amount from the gross sum of man's life, how small is the remainder! Even the active and busy part of mankind apply very little more than a third part of their existence to any valuable purpose. By this mode of calculation, the old man of eighty has lived but little more than twenty-six years; and the man of forty, but little more than thirteen. A most cogent reason for not wasting an hour.

We should never forget that our time is amongst the talents for which we must give account at the bar of God. Time being not the least precious of these, will be required with a strictness proportionate to its value. Let us tremble at this idea, as well we may. We must be tried not only for what we have done, but for what we had time to do, yet neglected to do: not only for the hours spent in sin, but for those wasted in idleness.

* See Johnson's Idler.

Let us beware of that mode of spending time which some call killing it.

"For this murder, like others, will not always be concealed: the hours destroyed in secret will appear when we least expect it, to the unspeakable terror and amazement of our souls: they arise from the dead, and fly away to heaven, whither they might have carried better news, and there tell sad tales of us, which we shall be sure to hear of again, when we hold up our hands at the bar, and they shall come as so many swift witnesses against us."

It may stir us up to diligence in the improvement of our time, to think how much of it has been already mis-spent. What days, and weeks, and months, and years, have already been utterly wasted, or exhausted upon trifles totally unworthy of them! They are gone, and nothing remains of them but the guilt of having misimproved them. We cannot call them back if we would; and all we can do is to let their memorial, like the recollection of any other dead friends whom we treated improperly while they lived, lead us to value more highly, and to use more kindly, those that remain.

How much of our time is already gone, and how little may be yet to come! The sands of our glass may be almost out, without the possibility of having it turned. Death may be at the door. When you begin a day you know not that you shall end it; when you lie down that you shall rise up; when you go from home that you shall ever return. For what is your life? It is even as a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanishes; a bubble that rises, and shines, and bursts. We know not in any one period of our existence but that it may be the last. Surely, surely, then we should improve our time, when we may be holding, for aught we know, the last portion of it in our hands. With the absolute certainty of a life as long as Methu-

selah's, not an hour should be wasted; how much less when we know not that there is a day in reversion for us!

But what are the purposes for which time should be redeemed? For the salvation of the soul, the business of religion, the preparation for eternity. You are immortal creatures, my children, and must live for ever in torment or in bliss: and certainly you cannot be forming a right estimate of the value of time, nor be rightly employing it, if your souls be forgotten, salvation neglected, and eternity left out of consideration, "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" A man may attain to the science of Newton, to the learning of Bentley, to the wealth of Crœsus, and to the fame of Alexander; but if the salvation of the soul be neglected, he will through eternity confess and curse his folly, in losing his time. Our great business in this world is to prepare for the next; time is capital given us to trade with for eternity; and that man who goes off the stage of life without having attended supremely to the great business of religion, will appear to the inhabitants of the unseen world, as well as to himself, an object of amazement for his unparalleled folly in wasting his time upon matters, which, compared with eternal happiness, were utterly insignificant. We must redeem time for the pursuits of business, for it is ordained that men shall gain their bread by the sweat of their brow; for the improvement of our mind, so far as circumstances will allow, in all useful knowledge; and for the exercise of benevolence. These are the objects which we must ever keep in view, as the claimants who prefer their demands for the years and the days which God hath given us upon earth.

And from what is our time to be redeemed? From sloth. How much of it is consumed by this lazy, slumbering monster! How many golden hours are wasted upon the downy pillow! Late rising is the enemy of piety, of knowledge, of health, of affluence: and the cause of ignorance, irreligion, and poverty. Shall religion, wisdom, benevolence, be found knocking at your chamber door, morning after morning, exclaiming, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise;" and receive no other answer than, "a little more sleep, and a little more slumber?" A habit of early rising has, in many cases, been a fortune to the pocket, and in many more, a fortune to the mind. Reckoning that a day consists of ten hours' active employment, the difference of life, between an individual who rises at six o'clock, and another who rises at eight, is in the term of sixty years, no less than equal to twelve years, and those the best years of a man's existence. There is in this calculation that which proves late rising not only to be a loss but a crime. It is so much deducted from a man's existence and actually given to his grave. Many of the most distinguished characters in the literary world owe their eminence to early rising. It is recorded of Buffon, the celebrated natural historian, that wishing to acquire the habit of early rising, both from his love of knowledge and of fame, he promised his servant half-a-crown for every morning upon which he should prevail upon him to leave his bed by a given time. The servant went most resolutely to work, under a commission that authorised him to drag Buffon, if necessary, out of bed; and, in spite of threats and ill-usage, which he often had to endure from his somnolent master, succeeded in getting him from his chamber by the stipulated hour. And

Buffon inform us, that to the unwearied perseverance of his servant, the world is indebted for his work on Natural History. It is a most injurious practice to invert the order of nature, and sit up late instead of rising early. Nocturnal studies rapidly undermine the strongest constitution. Dr. Owen, a name dear to all who love sterling piety and profound theological learning, used to say, when suffering through his excessive application to study, "That he would gladly give up all the knowledge he had acquired after ten o'clock at night, if he could recover all the strength he had lost by studies carried on after that hour."

"Let your sleep, then, be necessary and healthful, not idle an expensive of time, beyond the needs and conveniences of nature; and sometimes be curious to see the preparation which the sun makes, when he is coming forth from his chambers in the east."

Redeem time from the vain pursuits of personal decoration and dress. This applies chiefly, though not exclusively, to the softer sex. It is shocking to think how much precious time is wasted at the toilet, in the silly ambition of rivalling the butterfly, the ostrich, and the peacock. What a reproach to a rational creature is it to neglect the improvement of the mind for the adornings of the body: it is like painting the outside of a house, and training over it the myrtle, the rose, and the jessamine, while the interior is left to be dark, damp, inconvenient, and filthy.

Unprofitable reading is another consumer of time which must be avoided. Worldly amusements, and parties of pleasure, are also injurious. I do not by this mean to condemn the occasional intercourse of friends in the social circle, where the civilities of life are given and received, the ties of friendship strengthened, and

the mind recreated, without any injury being done to its spiritual or moral interests. But the theatre, the card-table, the billiard-room, are all to be avoided as vile thieves, which steal our time, and hurt our souls. Pleasure parties in general are to be watched against with care, and resorted to but seldom, for they seldom pay for the time that is spent.

"There are a multitude of people in the world, who, being idle themselves, do their best endeavours to make others so: in which work, partly through a disposition in those others to be made so, and partly through a fear and false shame, which hinders them from fraying away such birds of prey, they are too often suffered to succeed. An assemblage of such persons can be compared only to a slaughter-house, where the precious hours, and often the characters of all their friends and acquaintance, are butchered without mercy."

We must redeem time from the trifling conversation and gossip of idle companions, "for no man," says Jeremy Taylor, "can be provident of his time, that is not prudent in the choice of his company: and if one of the speakers be vain, tedious, and trifling, he that hears, and he that answers, are equal losers in their time." The Idler says, "that there are always some drones in society, who make much noise, but no honey." We should avoid all those who talk much, but say little, and watch against persons whose conversation is like the buzz of moths, not only disagreeable, but carrying on a system of spoliation; and who eat into an hour before we are aware that the mischief is commenced. Such persons should consider that in consuming a man's time they are committing a felony upon his property, for time is a part of his capital. And all others should retire from such persons, for idleness is contagious.

If you would redeem the time, you should not only

avoid absolute idleness, or doing nothing, but a slow and sauntering habit of doing anything. To use an old proverb, "We ought not to make greater haste than good speed." There are some persons who are always in a hurry, and all they do bears marks of haste. Everything is half done, or ill done. But there is a wide difference between habits of dispatch, and bustling hurry. A thing is not better done for having twice as much time consumed upon it as it needs. There are individuals who seem always to creep to an engagement, and almost to slumber over it. As it respects general habits, a parent can scarcely teach a child a more valuable art than despatch without bustle; nor can any one that values his time cultivate a more desirable one for himself.

Order and Punctuality are essential to a right improvement of time. I mention these things together, because they are so closely connected, and have such a mutual influence on each other. One, indeed, is the order of place, the other is the order of time. The best, and indeed the only rules, which any man can with propriety prescribe for himself, are these: "A time for every thing, and every thing in its time: a place for every thing, and every thing in its place." A habit of order may be fairly said to lengthen a man's life, not by multiplying its hours, but by enabling him more advantageously to employ them. Disorderly habits are perpetually wasting our time. When a person has no one place for any one thing, but lays every thing by, just wherever he may happen to be, he is sure to spend his life in confusion. He never knows where to find what he wants. Let such a person conceive what an amount of time would be made up by all the minutes and hours which he has employed during

his life in looking for misplaced articles; to say nothing of the mortification he has endured, and the inconvenience in which others have been involved. In business, order is property, and every tradesman deficient in this virtue, ought, in taking stock, to have this item on the loss side of the balance-sheet, "So much lost for want of order." And, as disorderly habits waste our time, they are not only improper, but actually sinful.

And then as to Punctuality. Fix your time, and ever keep it. Perhaps you know some persons who are always behindhand. The clock is to them an article without use: they do all things as if by whim or impulse. They are thus mischief-makers without malice; and as far as in them lies, bring a chaos into human affairs. An individual who keeps a company of twelve persons waiting for him but five minutes, wastes an hour.

"Punctuality," says an elegant writer, "is a quality which the interest of mankind requires to be diffused through all the ranks of life, but which many seem to consider as a vulgar and ignoble virtue, below the ambition of greatness, or the attention of wit: scarcely requisite among men of gaiety and spirit, and sold at its highest rate when it is sacrificed to a frolic or a jest."

Punctuality has another reference besides our time, I mean to our word. To promise without intending to perform is absolute falsehood. But we ought to be very cautious how we bind ourselves by a promise which is subject to contingencies beyond our foresight, or above our control. Many a man has subjected himself to the reproach of a liar without intending to deceive. Some people make all engagements with their eyes shut, and no sooner open them than they find it impossible to fulfil their word. We should always pause before we issue these verbal promissory notes, and calculate

whether we have the means to meet them when they are presented for payment. Nothing can be more unjust or cruel, than a wilful want of punctuality in pecuniary transactions. It is unkind to keep, through our delays, a cook storming over a spoiling dinner in the kitchen, and her mistress fretting in the drawing-room; but to defeat the expectation of a tradesman, dependent, perhaps, for a settling, important to his credit, upon our punctuality, is a species of cruelty perfectly inhuman. That a want of order and punctuality should be thought a mark of genius or gentility is astonishing, and I believe is rarely thought so, except by those who have nothing of either but the affectation of them. Many, I have no doubt, have set up for great wits, and fine ladies, upon no other pretensions to either, than a sturdy opposition to all order of time and place.

Good method wisely arranged and punctually observed in the distribution of our time, would materially assist us in rightly employing it. Religion, business, mental improvement, the exercises of benevolence, ought all, so far as the ever varying circumstances of life will admit of it, to have their proper allotments. Each hour should know its proper employment, and receive its proper care in its season. No man should leave his days to be occupied by whatever accident or chance can seize them; for then, trifles being more common and clamorous than other things of greater importance, are likely to run off with the greatest share.

Have always some work in hand, which may be going on during the many intervals, for many there will be both of business and recreation. Pliny, in one of his letters, where he gives an account of the various me-

thods he used, to fill up every vacancy of time, after several employments which he enumerates, says,

"Sometimes I hunt; but then I carry with me a pocket-book, that whilst my servants are busied in disposing of the nets and other matters, I may be employed in something that may be useful to me in my studies; and that if I miss of my game, I may at the least bring home some of my own thoughts with me, and not have the mortification of having caught nothing all day."

This is the way to excellence and wisdom; and it is a road open to all. Carry about with you, I again say, some book, or subject, which will gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost; for these fragments, like chips of diamond, or filings of gold, are too precious to be thrown away. It is with our property as it is with our time, when we look at it in the gross, we spend freely, because it seems as if it would never be exhausted; and when we have hours, half-hours, or quarters, we squander them, because they are not worth keeping. There is a proverb which our frugal ancestors have taught us, "Take care of the shillings, and the pounds will take care of themselves." So in reference to our time I would say, "Take care of your hours, and the years will take care of themselves." A man that is thrifty of his money, will grow rich upon what another throws away as not worth saving; so a man that is thrifty of his time will grow wise by those interstitial vacancies which intervene in the most crowded variety of employment, and which many are foolish enough to squander upon trifles, or saunter away in idleness.

Avoid procrastination. Do at once what at once ought to be done. Let not the season of action be spent in the hesitancy of scepticism, or the purpose of future effort. Do not let to-morrow be perpetually the

time when every thing is to be done, unmindful that the present time alone is ours, as the past is dead, and the future yet unborn.

Erasmus furnishes one of the most striking instances on record of the fruits of a diligent improvement of time.

"His life was one continual peregrination; ill supplied with the gifts of fortune, and led from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom, by the hopes of patrons and preferment, hopes which always flattered and always deceived him: he yet found means, by unshaken constancy and a vigilant employment of those hours, which, in the midst of the most restless activity, will remain unengaged, to write more than another, in the same condition, would have hoped to read. Compelled by want to attendance and solicitation, and so much versed in common life, that he has transmitted to us the most perfect delineation of the manners of his age; he joined to his knowledge of the world such application to books, that he will stand for ever in the first rank of literary heroes. How this proficiency was obtained, he sufficiently discovers by informing us that the 'Praise of Folly,' one of his most celebrated performances, was composed by him on the road to Italy, lest the hours which he spent on horseback should be tattled away without regard to literature."

A right improvement of time then, my dear children, is the way to knowledge, which does not in every case require uninterrupted leisure; only keep the mind open to receive ideas, and diligently employ every spare moment in collecting them, and it is astonishing how rapidly the accumulation of mental treasure will go forward. But it is chiefly in reference to eternity that I exhort you to redeem the time. Too many attempt to justify their neglect of religion by pleading a want of opportunity to attend to its high concerns: but how inadmissible such a plea is the subject of this chapter plainly proves: for as I have formerly shown, religion is a right disposition of mind towards the great and blessed God, and such a disposition, besides the more

solemn seasons of public and private prayer, will pour its influence over the whole of a man's life, and fill the interstices which are left between the most continuous engagements, with ejaculatory petitions to heaven, and the aspirations of a soul panting after God, and the anticipations of a renewed mind looking towards eternity.

Remember then above all things that time was given you to repent of sin, to pray for pardon, to believe in Christ, to work out your salvation, to lay up treasures in heaven, to prepare for the solemnities of judgment, and secure that happiness which is not measured by the revolution of years, but is, in the strictest sense of the word, eternal.

PRAYER.

O THOU that inhabitest eternity, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years, give me, I beseech thee, a due sense of the value of time. Impress my heart with a trembling solicitude to redeem from sloth, and all useless occupations, the passing hours which fly so rapidly away. Help me to gather up the fragments of time, that nothing be lost. May I never waste an hour. O, convince me that eternity hangs upon every moment, and that every moment, for aught I can tell, may be my last. So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. Help me to remember that for every hour I must give account in the day of judgment. O save me from the guilt and condemnation of murdered time, and help me so to improve my days as that they may issue in a happy eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OBLIGATION TO ENTER INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Religion is a personal thing, and the gospel addresses us in our individual and separate existences. We must each for himself repent of sin, believe in Christ, obey the law. Nothing can be a substitute for this: no line of pious ancestry, no connexion with living Christians, no communion with the Church of God, will be of any avail to us in the absence of faith and holiness. Still however, religion, though personal in its nature, is social in its tendency and exercises; it is superinduced on a being formed for society, and carrying this propensity of his heart into every situation. Hence his piety leads him to seek the companionship of men of "like precious faith." Christianity acknowledges and hallows this principle of our nature, and exhibits it in her own divine institutions. The New Testament therefore, while it insists on the necessity of a personal religion, equally demands a social one. It knows nothing of that piety which keeps its possessor separate and apart from those who partake with him of the "common salvation." The first thing we read of after the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, is the

preaching of the gospel; the next the conversion of sinners, and then we find that "they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer. And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Such is the lovely picture which the inspired historian gives us of the first effect of the preaching of the gospel, in which we perceive not only that souls were converted, but that immediately upon their conversion, they were drawn to each other by the force of mutual love, and formed a voluntary and blessed fellowship. No one that believed the gospel remained separate and apart from the rest, but gave himself up to be one with the church; and indeed, till he did this, was not acknowledged as a Christian. This was always the case in the primitive times; as soon as a man believed, that same day, without being put on his trial for months, he united himself with believers. No such custom then existed, as that persons who were acknowledged to be Christians, should remain year after year without visible connexion with the body of Christ; this is a system of modern times.

Indulging a hope, which indeed is one of the most blissful expectations of my heart, that you, my dear children, will be partakers of the grace of God, the faith of the gospel, and the love of Christ, I shall now

strongly enjoin upon you an early association with some Christian society. It is on these suppositions only that I recommend it. Church fellowship is intended, not so much to make men Christians, as to maintain and improve their Christianity; not as an ordinance of conversion, but of edification, sanctification, and consolation. A Christian church is thus described in the Epistles of Paul: "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." Unless, therefore, you really believe in Jesus Christ, and are sanctified by the Spirit of God, you are not meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. If you were to join the church in an unconverted state, you would be as an enemy amongst brethren, a stranger amongst friends, an alien amongst citizens, a rebel amongst subjects. Taking it then for granted that you believe in Christ, and supremely love him, I admonish you to connect yourselves, in his own way, with his own people.

It is your solemn and bounden duty. Mistake not by supposing that this matter is left to your choice; it is no more optional than any other part of religion. You may just as well imagine that it is optional whether you shall keep the sabbath or not. Strange it is that this part of a Christian's duty should have been detached by many persons from all the rest as an observance which had no obligation upon the conscience. Was it not an invariable practice in the first ages of the church, for those who were converted to enter immediately into the fellowship of the faithful? Our Lord's language in reference to the sacred supper, is a command, not an invitation; it is the language of authority, not of advice:

"Do this in remembrance of me." Now as the Supper is a church ordinance, this injunction makes it absolutely imperative on all his disciples to unite themselves to the "household of faith." Far be it from me to say that a person cannot be a Christian unless he be a church member, for I have already observed, that he ought to be a believer before he enters into fellowship; but I will say that he who loves Christ, and yet continues unconnected with the church, is living, in that instance, in direct disobedience to his Lord's commands. And if one of the primitive Christians were permitted to come from his celestial seat, into our assembly, at the time we were preparing to celebrate the Supper, he would very certainly and naturally conclude, that all those persons who rose and retired from the emblems of the Saviour's body and blood, neither believed in him, loved him, nor obeyed him. And when informed that amongst that crowd, there were still some of whom we entertained hope, that they did in reality love Jesus Christ, with what surprise and emphasis would he exclaim, "Love Christ! what, and live in habitual disobedience to his commands? We have no such love as that in heaven, nor had we when I lived on earth."

It is your unspeakable honour to be early in the church. It has been the dishonour and is still the reproach of multitudes, that they neglect this divine ordinance. Admitting that, upon the whole, a man is a Christian who yet through some mistaken notion is unconnected with a company of believers, what a spot is it upon his character, what a stain upon his garments, to see him, when the company of Christ's disciples are collecting round the table, hurrying away with the mul-

titude of carnal, worldly, sensual persons; thus associating in this act of disregard to Christ's authority, with some that are profane, others that are sceptical, others that are immoral! What a disgrace is it to any one who pretends to bear the name of Christ, to be seen thus turning his back on the friends of the Redeemer, and walking away from the Christian institute with the enemies of the cross! But, alas! this reproach is too common to be felt as it ought to be.

But it is so much the greater honour to observe this duty, by so much the more it is neglected. It is considered delightful to see the head of the youthful senator whose breast is full of patriotic ardour lifted amidst the venerable forms of aged statesmen; and the juvenile warrior fighting by the side of veteran heroes in his country's cause; and how much more delightful is it to see the young Christian, undeterred by a false and sinful shame, unrestrained by the examples of many of his seniors, entering the fellowship of the faithful, and, in the presence of the world exclaiming, "I am not ashamed of Christ, or of his words, before this adulterous and sinful generation. Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God; their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will pay my vows

unto the Lord now, in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord."

Oh, my children, may I see this honour lighting on you; may it be granted me to see you sitting amongst the followers of the Lamb, associated with the church of the living God; and I shall not be very solicitous for you to obtain the wreath of fame, or any of the distinctions which men can confer upon each other; the honour of being an early and consistent member of that fellowship, of which God in Christ is the head, is, in my eyes, a crown of glory, compared with which the diadems of monarchs are gilded toys.

Church fellowship is an inestimable privilege. It is connected with and leads to many solemn, delightful, and beneficial observances. It is by joining ourselves to the church, that we observe the Lord's Supper. This sacred feast is to be observed by the church as such; not by individuals in their separate condition. In approaching the table of the Lord, we are to go as one of a company. It is intended at once to exhibit our unity, and to preserve it. That bread which is the emblem of the natural body of Christ broken for sinners, is at the same time, by its many parts in union with each other, the emblem of his mystical body. It is an ordinance which at the same time sets forth our union both to Christ by faith, and to each other by love. It exhibits one church deriving its salvation from the death of one Redeemer. Hence the object of our partaking of the sacred supper, is to keep up right affections to Christ, and to each other for Christ's sake. Precious are the hallowed seasons of communion which are spent by the disciples at the table of the Lord. No sensual

gratifications will bear any comparison with the sublime delight of those sacred entertainments. What scenes of past wonder, and sorrow, and triumph, are then brought to recollection, even the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Yes, those apparently insignificant emblems bring before the mind, so far as the mind can comprehend it, the whole of the vast scheme, devised from eternity in the counsels of Omniscience for the salvation of the ruined world, and executed by the Son of God upon the cross. What present emotions of wonder, joy, love, gratitude, to him "who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests to God and the Lamb," does the Supper produce and cherish! What visions of future glory, connected with the second coming of our Lord, does the institution call up before the eye of hope! How sweetly are the rich blessings of grace, and the eternal blessings of glory, brought home upon the heart! All the virtues of Christianity are strengthened, all its privileges are enjoyed. The soul by being brought nearer to Christ is brought nearer to his disciples. The joys of salvation are more rich and full by being experienced in the company of those who are heirs of the same bliss. It is of great importance that you should take up right views of the design of the Lord's Supper. It is simply a commemorative ordinance, and intended according to the words of both our Lord and the apostle Paul, to put us in remembrance of Christ's death for our salvation. There is nothing whatever that is mystic or mysterious about it, "Do this," said the Saviour, "in remembrance of me." It conveys no grace though it exhibits it. There is indeed a presence of Christ, but it is with the

worthy recipient, not in the bread and the wine. Do not look for more than Christ intended. There is neither Transubstantiation nor Consubstantiation. Nothing but bread and wine as the emblems of Christ's body and blood.

Union with the church gives a right to attend all the more private meetings of the brethren, where pastoral exhortations are delivered, brotherly love is cherished, members are admitted, and all the transactions of the household of God are managed.

Church membership is connected with many pleasant reflections. In such a situation we have the consciousness of our being where we ought to be; of our obeying the will of Christ; of our being in the midst of the righteous, as one of their number, and an object of their interest.

It is no inconsiderable means of spiritual safety. In general it may be argued that the path of duty is the path of safety. Where are we so likely to enjoy the showers of divine grace as in those gardens of the Lord on which they most usually fall? "God meeteth him that worketh righteousness." It is connected with pastoral oversight and watchfulness, with brotherly inspection, exhortation and reproof; it secures an interest in the prayers and sympathy of the disciples; and it leads us to consider the additional obligations which lie upon us in consequence of our profession, and the more than usually painful effects which accordingly would follow an act of inconsistency on our part: in short, it seems to be an additional defence against the dangers to which we are exposed in our spiritual warfare. In looking forward to our approach to the table of the Lord, we shall be led to more frequent and serious examination. In look-

ing back to the vows which we there brought ourselves under we shall be stirred up to more caution. Considering through the previous month that we are soon to appear amongst the saints at the sacramental board, we shall find this a check to temptation, a stimulus to duty, a motive to consistency; and looking back during the following month upon what then took place, we shall find the retrospect no less salutary than was the prospect. A regard to our own reputation and comfort will join itself to a concern for the honour of Christ and the prosperity of the church, to operate as a preservative against unholy conformity or sinful indulgence. We are poor frail creatures, and our spiritual strength is so feeble as to stand in need of every additional help; and it is no inconsiderable assistance that is furnished by Christian fellowship. Companionship is one of the hotbeds both of sin and holiness. Trees grow better, as I have already remarked, in plantations; they shelter each other from the violence of the wind and the severity of the cold, and draw each other into a taller and a straighter growth: so it is with the trees of righteousness of God's own right hand planting; and it is by being thus planted in the house of the Lord, that they shall flourish as the palm-tree, and grow as the cedar in Lebanon.

You may thus be useful to others. Your parents will rejoice over you with unutterable joy; your ministers will be encouraged in the work of the Lord; other young persons, if serious, may be drawn by you into the church; or if unconverted, may have their attention roused and their conscience awakened; the more aged who have neglected this duty will be stirred up to shame and repentance: thus what is so beneficial to you will extend its advantage to others, and the King

of Sion will look upon you with peculiar and ineffable delight.

Before this chapter closes, however, I must answer the objections which are but too commonly brought by young persons, even by those whose hearts are right with God, against this act of obedience to Christ.

Some are in doubt about their personal religion. Where this is the case, let them not remain in doubt any longer, but examine themselves and bring the matter to an issue. "Examine yourselves," saith the apostle, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves." This is too important an affair to remain undecided and in suspense. Nor need you be kept in the dark about it. If you really reflect, you must know whether you believe the gospel or not. Whether you love the Lord Jesus or not; whether you are obeying God or not. Do not doubt your religion under the mistaken apprehension that doubts are proofs of piety, and evidences of humility. Your inquiry is not to be, "Am I a perfect Christian?" but "Am I a real one?" If you can answer the latter question in the affirmative, you ought not to remain out of the communion of the church.

Others are saying, "I am not fit to join the church yet." Then you are not fit to die. God requires no other pre-requisite for admission to the Lord's table than he does for heaven; and all the fitness requisite for either is to be convinced of sin, to believe the gospel, and to forsake unrighteousness.

"I am afraid," say some, "of making a public profession, lest I should dishonour Christ by sinning afterwards." In some cases this is nothing more than an excuse for not making a profession at all, as if it were no sin to offend God before a profession is made. Many dread

the idea of binding themselves by the acknowledgment that they are Christians; forgetting that it is a sin not to do so, and that they will be condemned for neglecting to make, as others will be for disgracing, a profession. If, however, it be really the mistaken scruple of a timid mind, I would say again, the way of duty is the way of safety; do your duty and trust God for preserving grace. For a man to be afraid of doing what is right, lest he should afterwards do wrong, is singular caution; he forgets that by his neglect he is already sinning. What reason is there in saying, "I am very weak, and therefore will neglect this prop; I am liable to start aside, and therefore will not avail myself of this scriptural restraint?"

"I am too young" is, I believe, the thought of many. Certainly not, if you are not too young to believe the gospel, to love Christ, and to discern the Lord's body. Is there an age specified in the New Testament below which no one is to join the church? If so, what is it? There is none. Faith working by love is the qualification of membership, not years. Age has nothing to do with it. If we might make any difference, I was going to say the younger the more welcome.

"I see it neglected by others older than myself, even by my own brothers and sisters." Would it be any excuse for your neglecting salvation altogether, that they were to do so? Certainly not; for religion is a personal concern, the obligations of which in our case are in no degree dependent on the manner in which they are acknowledged by others. The more it is forgotten by them the more we should feel excited to practise its duties ourselves. Your obedience is not to be withheld, because your friends or relatives neglect theirs. It may

be that your decision will have a favourable influence on their minds: but if not, even if on the contrary you should by such an act incur their displeasure, you are not to let this operate on your heart. Your duty to Christ is paramount to all other considerations, and you must obey him, though it be by taking up your cross.

"I do not like the mode of admission to our churches. I do not like to be examined as to my religious views or experience, nor to submit the state of my mind to the consideration of the church." If you mean to say you refuse all examination, this savours of pride or ignorance, and plainly manifests either that you do not understand the nature of the Christian church, or understanding it, refuse to submit to its discipline: in the latter case, I do not see how you can be a Christian: in the former, you must be better instructed before you associate yourself with the faithful. If you mean only that you would rather not either write, or deliver verbally before the church, your views and feelings on religion, I reply, that no church ought to insist upon it; all they ought to do, is to state what is their usual custom, but if you have scruples of a tender conscience, they ought to be satisfied with the report of the pastor and brethren who have conversed with you.

"I tremble at the denunciation, where it is declared by the apostle, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.'" This word had better have been rendered "judgment," as it refers to those visitations of temporal punishment, with which the members of the Corinthian church were punished for their profanation of the Lord's Supper. It certainly was not the apostle's intention, as some

weak and timid minds seem to think, to teach that sins committed after this act of christian communion are unpardonable. Transgressions committed after a participation of the eucharist, are, it is confessed, additionally heinous, because committed against increased privileges and obligations, but they are still pardonable through "the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin."

"I may be a Christian, and get to heaven without being united with the church." That there are some in this case, I have no doubt; but it becomes a question whether any one can really be a Christian, who knows it to be a duty, and yet wilfully neglects it under the pretext just stated.

"I do not like the church which is formed in the place where I live. I am pleased neither with the pastor nor the people." If the minister is unholy or erroneous, or the people divided into parties and destitute of both peace and purity, this excuse may be admitted; but if the objection apply to the talents of the minister, or to the worldly circumstances of the church, you discover, in thus refusing to obey the command of Christ, a spirit of pride and worldly-mindedness, which renders your faith very questionable, or proves it to be very weak.

Having thus explained the nature, and stated the advantages of church-fellowship, and replied to some of the excuses by which a neglect of it is attempted to be justified, I must leave the subject to your serious consideration. It is perfectly obvious to every thinking and observant mind, that the obligations to this act of duty, are not felt, at least as they ought to be, by many who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious."

To such persons I recommend the consideration of those passages in which a profession of faith before men is most imperatively demanded. "Whosoever," saith our Lord, "shall confess my name before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven; and whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." These words occur also with little variation, in the Gospel of Luke. The same sentiment is conveyed by the apostle Paul: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In these passages, and others of similar meaning, a confession or profession, for the words are nearly the same in signification, bears a very close connexion with the hope of salvation: and how any one can be said to make a confession of Christ, who does not connect himself with a christian church, I am certainly at a loss to understand.

PRAYER.

Blessed God, I adore thee as the Lord of my heart, my conscience, and my life, to whom it is at once my duty, my honour, and my bliss, to dedicate myself in the bonds of a covenant never to be broken. I thank thee for the provision thou hast made in the various means of grace for the instruction, edification, and consolation of thy people, and especially for church-fellowship and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Help me, O Lord, to decide what is my duty in reference to these things. I dare appeal to thine omniscience for the truth of my words when I say, that if I have any hesitation about

this matter it arises not from any false shame, fear of man, or disregard of thine authority, but from an uncertainty as to what is my duty. But, as the heart is deceitful, I may possibly be mistaken in the cause of my hesitancy, and there may be unworthy timidity and dread of consequences still lurking within me. I therefore make it my humble request to thee, O Lord, that thou wouldst be graciously pleased to instruct me in knowledge both of myself and of my duty. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart. Am I in a right state of mind and heart to unite with thy church, and be a guest at thy table? Let me neither insult thee, and bring guilt upon my conscience, by unworthily partaking the Lord's Supper, nor wrong my own soul by a sinful absence from it. Scatter my remaining doubts, if thou seest they have no just foundation. Fill me with a more assured faith, a more ardent love, and a more entire self-consecration. Grant that thy Word, thy Providence, and thy Spirit, may so concur as to make my way plain before me: let all obstacles be removed out of the way. May the view of Christ crucified be so familiar to my mind, and may a sense of his dying love so powerfully constrain my soul, that my own growing experience may put it out of all question that I am one of those for whom he intended this feast of love. Amen.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREAT END OF LIFE.

Never was there a more rational, or a more important question proposed for the consideration of the human understanding, than that which stands first in the Assembly's Catechism, "What is the chief end of man?" This, I say, is a most rational and a most important inquiry; for every thinking being should certainly ask himself, "What is the great end of my existence? I find myself in a world where innumerable objects present themselves to my notice, each soliciting my heart, and each claiming to be most worthy of its supreme regards. I have faculties of mind capable of high pursuits. I perceive, by universal experience, that my stay in this world will be very short, for I am only a stranger and a sojourner here upon earth, as all my fathers were; and as I am anxious not to go out of the world without answering the end for which I came into it, I wish to know the chief purpose for which I exist." Such a reflection is what every one should make, but which very few do make. Would they fritter away their lives as they do, on the most contemptible trifles, if they seriously inquired for what purpose their lives were given?

What, then, is the chief end of man? You will perceive, I lay all the stress of the inquiry on the adjective; for there are many ends to be kept in view, many purposes to be accomplished, many objects to be sought. We must provide for our own sustenance, and the comfort of our family; we should store our mind with useful knowledge: and endeavour to be useful, ornamental, and respectable members of society; and there are many other things which may be lawfully pursued; but I am now considering that one great object, which is paramount to all others, to which all others must be subservient, and the loss of which will constitute life, whatever else we might have gained, a lost adventure.

There are five claimants for this high distinction, this supreme rank, in the objects of human pursuit, the pretensions of which shall be separately examined.

Riches, with peculiar boldness, assert their claims to be "the one thing needful," and multitudes practically confess the justice of the demand. Hence, there is no deity whose worshippers are more numerous than Mammon. We see many all round us who are obviously making this world the object of their solicitude. Wealth is with them the main chance. For this they rise early, and sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness, and drink the water of affliction. This is their language, "I care for nothing if I may but succeed in business, and acquire property. I will endure any fatigue, make any sacrifice, suffer any privation, so that I at last may realize a fortune." It is perfectly evident that beyond this they have neither a wish nor an object. Money, money, money, is their chief good, and the highest end of their existence. God, religion, the soul, salvation, heaven, hell, are as much forgotten as if they were mere

fables, and all the energies and anxieties of their soul are concentrated in wealth. Is this rational, to say nothing of religion? Consider the uncertainty which attends the pursuit of this object. Fortune has been often described as a capricious goddess, not always bestowing her golden gifts on those who by their prudence and industry seem most to deserve them. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." The wisest and most plodding worldling sometimes ends in poverty. And shall we seek that as the end of life which after all we may never gain? Shall we deliberately devote existence to secure that which after all we may never secure? How many miserable creatures are going down to the grave, confessing that they have spent their lives in courting fortune, and having scarcely obtained a smile from her, while others, who have hardly asked her favours, have been loaded with them. Poor creatures! they may say in reference to the world, what Cardinal Wolsey did in reference to his king: "Had I served God with half the zeal that I have served Mammon, he would not now have forsaken me in my old age." But even granting that the end is secured, do riches bring all the pleasures in their train which they promise? It is a very trite remark, that a man's happiness is not in proportion to his wealth. "A man's life," said Christ, "consisteth not in the abundance of things which he hath;" and yet many act as if they denied the truth of the sentiment. Do you think that all rich men are happy, and that all poor men are miserable? As to mere animal enjoyment, does the affluent man receive a larger share than his poor neighbour? Whose head aches less for the costly plume that waves on his brow? Whose body enjoys the glow of health more for the rich

velvet which enwraps it, or the lace which adorns it? Whose sleep is sounder because it is enjoyed on down? Whose palate is more pleased because it is fed with many dishes instead of one and from silver instead of delf? Whose rest is more pleasant because his cushions are of silk? Whose bosom is more free from pain because of the diamond which sparkles there? Do riches multiply the number of the senses, or give other inlets of sensation to the soul, or increase the power of those we already possess? Do they add to the just and natural appetites, or afford greater gratifications to those we already feel? Do they insure health, or keep off disease? Nothing of the kind. Numerous servants, splendid equipages, rich furniture, luxurious living, are in the amount of a man's happiness, but as the small dust of the balance. We may say of these things as Pliny did of the pyramids of Egypt, "They are only proud proclamations of that wealth and abundance which their possessor knew not how to use." Care is the shadow of possession, and the magnitude of the shadow will always be in proportion to the dimensions of the substance. Great wealth certainly makes a man many anxieties. "What shall I do?" is a question often asked by affluence, as well as by penury. There is nothing in earthly things suited as a portion to the desires of the human mind. The soul of man needs something better for its provision than wealth. It is on this account, partly, that our Lord brands the rich man in the gospel for a fool, who, when he surveyed his treasures, and said to his soul, "Thou hast goods laid up for many years in store; eat, drink, and be merry." "A fool indeed," said Bishop Hopkins, "to reckon his soul's goods by barns full. He might as wisely have

boasted that he had provided barns full of thoughts for his body, as barns full of corn for his soul."

Then how precarious is the continuance of riches! They appear to us as in a dream; they come and are gone; they stand by us in the form of a golden image, high in stature, and deeply founded on a rock; but while we look at them they are transformed into an eagle with wings, and when we are preparing to embrace them they fly away. What changes have we witnessed even within our own circle of observation! How many do we know, now suffering want, who formerly rolled in affluence! They set out in life in the full sunshine of prosperity, but the storm overtook them, and blasted every comfort they had in the world. And if riches continue to the end of life, how uncertain is life itself! How often do we see persons called away by death in the very midst of their prosperity! Just when they have most reasons to desire to live, then they must die. Their industry has been successful, their desires after wealth have been gratified, they build houses, plant gardens, and when preparing for many years of ease and enjoyment, they quit all, for the sepulchre; and then, Whose shall those things be which they have amassed?

"It is recorded of Saladin, the Saracen conqueror, that after he had subdued Egypt, passed the Euphrates, and conquered cities without number; after he had retaken Jerusalem, and performed exploits almost more than human, in those wars which superstition had stirred up for the recovery of the Holy Land; he finished his life in the performance of an action that ought to be transmitted to the most distant posterity. A moment before he uttered his last sigh, he called the herald who had carried his banners before him in all his battles; he commanded him to fasten to the top of a lance, the shroud in which the dying prince was soon to be buried. 'Go,' said he, 'carry this lance, unfurl this banner, and while you lift up this standard,

proclaim, This, this is all that remains to Saladin the Great, the Conqueror, and the King of the Empire, of all his glory!'"

Yes, and that piece of linen in which his perishing remains shall be enwrapped, is all that will be left of his wealth to the rich man when he quits the present world. Not one step will his riches go with him beyond the grave. What a sad parting will that be when the soul shall leave all its treasures behind in this world, and enter upon another state of existence, whither it cannot take a farthing, and where it would be useless, if it could take it all. Then the miserable spirit, like a shipwrecked merchant, thrown on some strange coast after the loss of all his property, shall be cast on the shore of eternity without one single comfort to relieve its pressing and everlasting necessities.

The next pretender to the distinction of being the supreme good, and man's chief object of pursuit, is Pleasure. To this many devote their lives: some living for the sports of the field, others for the gratification of their appetites, others for the enjoyment of the round of fashionable amusements. Pleasure, in one form or other, is the object of pursuit with myriads. As to the gratification of our animal appetites, few will think it necessary to have much said to persuade them that to sink to the level of the brute creation, and to be upon a par with swine, goats, and cormorants, cannot be the chief end of a rational being. Who would not be ashamed to say, and even deliberately to think, they were sent into the world to consume so much property; to devour the produce of so many men's labour; to eat and drink away the little residue of wit and reason they have left; to mingle with this high and distinguished employment impure and scurrilous jests,

that they may befriend one another in proving themselves to be yet of human race, by showing they laugh as well as eat and drink? Surely, surely, that cannot be the chief end of man which sensualises, brutalises his nature; which drowns his reason, undermines his health, shortens his life, hurries him to the grave. And as to what are called the pleasures of the field, will any man say that God sent him into the world to ride after dogs, to run after birds, or torture fishes upon a hook?

Fashionable amusements seem to be with many the end of life. Multitudes live for pleasure of this kind. Ball succeeds to concert; the private rout to the public assembly; the card party to the dinner party; and in this busy round of fashionable follies does the life of many pass away. Can it be then the high object of existence to sing, and play, and dress, and dance? Do not these things, when we reflect upon them, look more like the pursuits of butterflies, grasshoppers, and canary birds, than of rational creatures? Is it not melancholy to see beings with faculties that fit them, if rightly improved, to converse with philosophers, with angels, with God, sinking to the amusements of children; and employing time as if it were given to them for nothing but mirth; and using the world as if it were created by God only to be a sort of play-ground or tennis court for its inhabitants? Does this kind of life satisfy those who pursue it? Far, very far, from it. Can any person, in reality, be further from happiness than those who live for pleasure? You shall hear the testimony of a man who will be admitted by all to be no incompetent judge: I mean Lord Chesterfield. The world was the God of his idolatry, he tendered his service to act as high priest for this divinity, published its liturgy, and conducted

its ceremonial. What happiness he found in the worship of his deity, and how far he recommends others to the shrine, you shall learn from his own pen; and by the way, this language furnishes the most powerful antidote that was ever published to the poison contained in his trumpery volumes.*

You will also call to remembrance, my dear children, that passage in the Life of Colonel Gardiner, whose history you have read, or should read, in which he tells us, that when living in all kinds of dissipation, and when complimented for the external gaiety of his demeanour as the "Happy Rake," he was in reality so perfectly wretched, and so entirely disgusted with his mode of living, that on beholding the gambols of his dog he wished he could change places with the unconscious animal.

Is pleasure then the chief end of life? Yes, in Dr. Doddridge's explanation of it in his beautiful epigram on his family motto, "Dum vivimus vivamus."

> "Live while you live, the epicure will say,
> And take the pleasure of the present day:
> Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
> And give to God each moment as it flies.
> Lord, in my view, let both united be,
> I live in pleasure when I live to thee."

Fame is with some the great end of life. This is an object which comparatively few can hope to obtain, and therefore for which few contend. Still there are some who do so, and if they were honest, they would tell you that the love of fame is a passion which, like the venom of a serpent injected into its own body, tortures itself.

* The same quotation as that made from Bishop Horne, which is to be found Vol v, p. 360, supra.

The pursuit of fame is attended with a state of mind the most remote from happiness.

"When it succeeds, it degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed, (and it is often disappointed,) it is exasperated into malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage, the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He lives upon the calamities of the world: the vices and miseries of mankind are his element and his food. Virtue, talents, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unremitting hostility. There are, who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity: a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character, wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that whatever appearance he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man in his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures, as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is destined to act, to suffer, and to sympathize, he considers life as a stage on which he is acting a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns; whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence, or his steps are dyed in blood; an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred."

When therefore we consider the perpetual restlessness of mind; the mortification arising from disappointed hopes; the envy which is generated by the success of competitors; the feverish excitement, which is kept up by the intense desire of victory; the love of fame will appear too torturing a state of mind to be the end of man's existence; it is plunging into a kind of purgatory for the mere chance of reaching a celestial summit.

Should the effort to gain distinction be successful will it reward the pains that have been expended to gain it? We have a striking illustration of the emptiness of the rewards of fame in the Memoirs of Henry

Martyn. He tells us, that after a severe contest with many distinguished competitors for the prize of being Senior Wrangler, the highest mathematical honour which the University of Cambridge can bestow upon its students, the palm was awarded to him; and having received it, he exclaims, "I was astonished to find what a shadow I had grasped." Perhaps there never yet was a candidate for fame, whatever was the particular object for which he contended, who did not feel the same disappointment. The reward of fame may be compared to the garlands in the Olympic games, which began to wither the moment they were grasped by the hand, or worn upon the brow of the victor.

How often do we see the aspirants to a place in the temple of Fame cut off by death; some just when they have begun the difficult ascent, others when half way up the hill, and a few when they have gained the summit, and tread upon the threshold of the sacred fane. A traveller thinks to gain immortal renown by tracing the unknown course of a river, laying open a new continent, discovering a new island, or describing the remains of ancient states, but dies like Cook, or Mungo Park, or Tweddell, or Bowditch, in the very midst of his discoveries. A warrior enters upon a military or naval life, and hopes to gather his laurels on the ensanguined field of conflict; and falling, like Wolfe or Nelson, in the hour of victory, receives the crown upon his bier, instead of his brow; and leaves his monument, in lieu of himself, to receive the tribute of his country's praise. The scholar and the philosopher pursue some new object of science or literature, and hope by their success to gain a niche for their statue in the temple of Fame: just as they have established their superiority, and are

about to reap their reward, they are removed by death, to a world where the rewards of talent have no place, and where virtue constitutes the sole distinction.

Those distinctions which now excite the desires, and inflame the ambition of so many ardent minds; which absorb the time, the energies, the interest, the health of their impassioned admirers and eager pursuers, are all of the earth, earthly: all terminate with the present world, and in reference to the eternal destiny of their possessors, have not the place of an atom, or the weight of a feather. In the admiration, and gratitude, and applause of their fellow-creatures; in the records of the journalist, the biographer, and the historian; in the acknowledgments of the present generation, and the remembrance of posterity, the envied individuals have their reward, but if true piety be wanting the greatest renown terminates soon and sadly. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;" but the smile of an approving God, the hope of eternal life, the possession of everlasting happiness, are no part of it. The star of their glory is amongst the number which, at the last day, shall fall from the heavens, and set in the blackness of darkness for ever. The astonishing works of Shakspeare, Bacon, Newton, Milton, Locke, which have surrounded their authors with such a radiant crown on earth, will not be mentioned in the judgment, nor procure so much consideration as a cup of cold water that was given to a disciple of Christ out of love to his Master.

What is earthly renown to a man who is in eternity? If he is in heaven, the praises of the whole globe cannot add one jot to his felicity; if he be in hell, they lessen not one pang of his misery: he is in either case

unconscious of all, inaccessible to all. To a lost soul in prison, who has sunk to perdition under a weight of earthly honours, what a dreadful sting must such a reflection as this give to all his sufferings! "Alas! alas! while my memory is almost idolized on earth, I am tormented in this flame."

Knowledge presents itself to some as the end of life. To store up ideas, to amass intellectual treasures, is the end and delight of their existence; they are never satisfied with what they know, and are always seeking for something which they do not know. They are literary misers. They labour in the world of mind. These, I admit, are far more rational than the others in selecting their chief end of existence. But still they are far from wisdom. The wisest of men has told us, "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under the sun. I communed with mine own heart; lo, I have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. I perceive that this also is vexation of spirit: for in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." Will knowledge comfort its possessors amidst the ills of life? Will it soothe them in the agonies of death? Will it avail them at the day of judgment? However it may dignify and delight them on earth, will it entitle them to heaven, or prepare them for its bliss? No, no. Knowledge alone will raise no man to the celestial city in which God dwells. It may elevate them to a pinnacle on earth, but will leave them at an infinite distance from heaven's threshold. It may lift them

high above the scorn and contempt of men below, but still leave them all exposed to the wrath and curse of God from above. There is something ineffably dreadful in anticipating the loss of any human soul: but the sense of agony is increased, when we think of the eternal ruin of a mind, which had accumulated stores of varied knowledge; it is painful to see the least and lowest spark of intelligence fluttering to extinction over the marshes of sensuality; but it is most painful to see one of the highest order of intelligences darting like a falling star into the blackness and darkness of eternal night. It is dreadful to follow such a spirit into the unseen world, and to behold in imagination the meaner damned, whom he spurned on earth as a vulgar herd, taking up against him the ancient taunt, "Art thou also become like unto us?" "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

Domestic comfort is with many the chief, the only end of life. They aspire not to riches, they pace not the giddy round of pleasure, they have no ambition for fame, they have no taste for science or learning; to marry happily and live comfortably, in moderate competency, is the limit of their prospects and pursuits. And is this all? This the chief end of life! Consider, much that has been said of riches will apply to this. Although you seek it, it is uncertain whether you will succeed. Should you gain your object, how soon it may be taken from you again. Your trade may be ruined, the partner of your joys and sorrows may be removed by death; your health may be impaired; if none of these things happen, you yourself may be removed to another world, when the one you now inhabit may appear most enchanting; or if spared to old age in un-

diminished enjoyment, how dreadful is the thought of going from a state of such comfort to another in which not a ray of peace will ever fall upon the spirit through everlasting ages.

Not one of the things which I have mentioned therefore is worthy to be the object of our supreme solicitude or ultimate pursuit. They may be all taken up as inferior and subordinate objects. We may in moderation, and by honest industry, not only endeavour to obtain a competency, but even affluence; we are allowed to desire and seek a comfortable settlement in the world; we may enjoy, in measure, the lawful pleasures of life; we may endeavour if our motives are right, to establish our reputation, not only for virtue but for talents; we may, to the widest extent, pursue our researches after knowledge; all this is allowed, not only by reason, but by revelation. Religion is not the enemy of one single excellence of the human character, nor opposed to any of the lawful possessions of the present world. But the question to be decided is, What is the chief end of man? It must be an object suited to the nature of man as a rational creature; an object which, if sought in a right manner, shall with absolute certainty be obtained; which shall not interfere with any of the necessary duties of the present state; which, when obtained, shall not only please, but satisfy the mind; which shall prepare us for our eternal state of existence, and accompany us to the unseen world as our portion for ever. All these things must enter into the chief good, the great end of life, the ultimate object of pursuit. There is but one thing in the universe to which this will apply, and to that one it will in all parts of the definition most strictly apply, and that is the salvation of the soul.

You are immortal creatures, lost sinners, capable of enjoying eternal happiness, yet exposed to the sufferings of eternal death: and what can be the chief end of an immortal being short of eternal life? Once admit that you are going on to eternity, and it would be idiocy to deny that any thing less than eternal happiness should be your great aim. The Assembly's Catechism has defined the chief end of man to be, "To glorify God and enjoy him for ever." This is strictly true, and accords with what I have said: for to glorify God is to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the soul; and under the influence of this faith, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world: and thus glorifying God on earth, we shall be taken to enjoy him for ever in that state of ineffable felicity which he hath prepared for them that love him. The salvation of the soul is a good which suits our rational nature; it is absolutely certain to those who seek it in the right way; it rather insures than interrupts all the other duties of life; it satisfies and delights the mind, giving consolation under its troubles, and contentment to its desires; it fits us for our eternal state, and goes with us to glory as our portion for ever.

But there are few who deny this in theory, although they neglect it in practice, and therefore I must now exhort you to keep this end of life constantly in view. Every man when he sets out on a journey or pursuit, should have a definite object, and constantly keep it in view. My dear children, you are setting out on the journey of life, you know the chief object of that journey, and now, ever keep it before your mind. Let this conviction not only be written on your understanding, like a picture delineated on ice,

or an impression produced on snow, which thaws beneath the next sun, but be engraven on your heart, like characters on a rock which nothing can efface, that your main business on earth is to obtain the salvation of your immortal soul. Let this conviction lie at the bottom of your whole character, let it be thoroughly wrought into the contexture of all your mental habits, let it be the main wheel in the whole machinery of your conduct. It is recorded of a pilgrim on his way to Jerusalem, that in passing through Constantinople, when that city was in its glory, he met with a friend, who, wishing to detain him in the eastern metropolis, took him about to see the beauties of that celebrated place. "Very splendid," exclaimed the pilgrim, "but this is not the holy city." So should we say to every thing which would limit and detain our hearts on earth, "Very good in its place, but it is not salvation." Often inquire of yourselves, and examine your hearts, whether you are keeping in mind this one thing needful. At the close of every division of your time, of your years, your months, your weeks, ask yourselves the question, "Is my eye upon the supreme summit of christian desire and expectation, or am I beginning to lower my aim, and change my object?" Regulate all your feelings of admiration and pity in reference to the conduct and situations of others, by this object. If you see the rich man accumulating wealth, the scholar increasing his stores of learning, the philosopher adding to the discoveries of science, the man of martial or literary renown gathering laurels to decorate his brow, but, at the same time, neglecting the claims and despising the blessings of religion, view them rather as objects of pity, than of envy; and rank them among the individuals

who are losing sight of the great end of a rational creature's existence. On the other hand, wherever you perceive an individual, however obscure in station, limited in acquirements, or afflicted in his circumstances, who is glorifying God, and preparing to enjoy him for ever, there recognize a man who is keeping before him the great end for which God sent him into this world.

Keep this in view in the selection of situations and the formation of connexions. Are you going out into life? Accept of no situation, however advantageous in a worldly point of view it may appear, where you are likely to be cut off from the means of grace, and the helps to a life of faith and holiness; bring the rule of life to it, and ask, Will it help or hinder me in the pursuit of salvation? Let this direct you in choosing the place of worship you attend, and the minister you hear. Inquire not where the people of fashion go, or who is the most eloquent preacher, but where the most instructive, awakening, and improving ministry of the word is to be enjoyed; and where you are likely to be kept most steadily in the pursuit of eternal life. In the profession of your religion, dwell most on the plain, and obvious, and important truths of the gospel, such as are most intimately connected with the life of piety in the heart; and turn not aside to novelties, speculations, and religious curiosities. In selecting your avocation in life, keep this in mind, and if there be any calling which, in your judgment, necessarily takes off the mind from religion, choose another in preference. In accepting or selecting a companion for life, let not this subject be put out of view, but consider how much you will be assisted or opposed in seeking eternal salvation, accord-

ing as your nearest earthly friend shall be one with you in Christ. In pitching your tabernacle, inquire not only what is the air, the prospect, the facilities for trade or pleasure; but what are the means of grace, the helps to religion, the ministry of the word, the society, in the neighbourhood. In short, let it appear in all you do, that the salvation of your soul is the one thing needful, the chief business of life.

Act, in reference to eternal salvation and the affairs of this life, as a man, who most tenderly loves and ardently longs for his home, does upon his journey, in reference to that home: he provides as comfortable an inn as he can honestly obtain, he enjoys the prospects which present themselves to his eye, he is pleased with the company he meets with on the road, he gains as much knowledge as he can accumulate by the way, he performs the duties of his calling as diligently, and secures as much profit as he equitably can, but still his eye and his heart are at home; for his comfort there, and not his pleasure abroad, he is supremely anxious; so far as he can promote, or not hinder his prosperity at home, he is willing to gain knowledge, to take pleasure, to secure respect abroad; but home is his great object; to reach that and prepare for its increasing comfort, is his aim and his hope. So act, my children, towards the salvation of the soul. This, this is the end of life: keep it constantly in mind: never lose sight of it. Gain all the knowledge, all the comfort, all the fame, all the wealth, you can, in subordination to this one great business; but remember that whatever subordinate ends you may pursue, the paramount object which you must seek, is to glory God and enjoy him for ever.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, thou art not only the first Cause, but the last End of all thy creatures, and for thy pleasure and glory they are and were created. I am one of those whom thou hast formed for thyself, to show forth thy praise. O help me clearly to understand, constantly to keep in view, and diligently to seek, the chief end of life. Keep me from all mistakes about the nature of the chief good. Let me not be left to ask in ignorant solicitude, Who will show me any good? May I know what is thy end in creating me and placing me in this world. Suffer me not to consider either wealth, pleasure, fame, or science, or even the quiet enjoyment of domestic comfort, or any other object upon earth, as the supreme end of my existence. Whatever measure of each or all of these thou shalt, in thy great goodness, see fit to bestow upon me, I shall be thankful, and endeavour to employ for thy glory. But O, help me practically to remember that man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever. Do not let me live for a lower end than that which thou dost intend for me. Help me to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, even the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Aid me to look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. I have but one life to spend upon earth, and O, suffer me not to throw that away upon objects unworthy of the regard of an immortal creature. Save me in thy great mercy from closing life with the bitter regret and lamentation that I have lived in vain. Preserve me from the temptations by which I am assailed to forget my eternal destiny and neglect the salvation of my soul. Grant me thy grace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PIOUS FAMILY MEETING IN HEAVEN.

The strength of our social feelings, and the pleasure which we derive from the indulgence of them, have very naturally originated the question, "Will those who were known to each other on earth, renew their acquaintance in heaven?" The feelings which prompted the question, have led us to answer it in the affirmative. It might indeed be enough to satisfy our hopes in reference to eternal happiness, to be assured that nothing shall be present which shall operate as an alloy, nothing be absent that shall be felt to be deficient. We know that the manifold wisdom of God is employed under the guidance of infinite love, in preparing a place for us; and we are also assured that God "is not ashamed to be called our God, because he hath prepared for us a city." All that is most essential to a state of perfect and everlasting felicity is exhibited and promised in the word of God; the beatific vision of God and the Lamb; complete resemblance in body and soul to the Lord Jesus; the light of perfect knowledge; the purity of perfect holiness; the glow of perfect love; the eternal exclusion of sin and of the sinner; the company and converse of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the myriads of holy

angels; the absence of pain and sickness, care and labour, sorrow and sighing, death and the curse; these are all explicitly assured to the believer in the gospel of Christ; and form a heaven which might entirely satisfy us as a state of felicity seemingly incapable of addition. This is glory, honour, immortality, eternal life. And yet in the view of all this, our social nature often prompts that one more question, "Shall we know each other in the celestial world?" The scripture, I admit, has not, in so many words, replied to the question, nor relieved the solicitude which asks it: and in this very reserve, we see a proof of the wisdom of God. Had the scriptures been explicit and diffuse on such topics; had they said much about the social intercourse of the unseen world; had they represented its felicity as arising in a great degree from the renewal of those friendships which were formed on earth, but suspended by death, many would have concluded, in the total absence of all religious feeling from their hearts, that they were meet for such an inheritance as this. Whereas the Bible, by revealing no part of the happiness of heaven but that which arises from sources strictly devotional, has given no countenance to delusion, and furnished no occasion for self-deception. None of the splendid visions which lie hid behind the veil are manifested, but such as tend to impress us with the conviction that, in order to behold and enjoy them, we must be holy even as God is holy.

These considerations, while they account for the reserve which is maintained by the scripture on this subject, do not, by any means, disprove the sentiment. Though I would not say with Irenæus, one of the earliest fathers of the church, that separate souls retain the

likeness and figure of their bodies, so that they may still be known thereby in the other world; though I by no means pretend even to speculate on the precise manner or means whereby glorified immortals will attain a knowledge of each other, whether by revelation or information, by any resemblance being left in the newly raised body to what it formerly was, or by that intuition which will, no doubt, be the way in which many things will be known, yet still I think that, in some way or other, this knowledge will be obtained.

1. The enjoyments and occupations of heaven are uniformly represented as social; but where is the charm of society without mutual knowledge?

2. Heaven is always represented as perfecting all our faculties; is it then probable that it will diminish memory, one of the most important of them? And if memory be still retained in full vigour, and if it be perpetually employed, as it inevitably must be, on the past scenes of our earthly existence, is it likely that the friends and companions of that existence, inhabiting then the same celestial world with us, will be unknown to us?

3. The chief grace that will be increased in the regions of the blest, next to love to God, will be love to our companions in glory. But will not one of the most pure, elevated, and delightful exercises of this holy passion be wanting, if we are ignorant of our glorified relatives?

4. In the general judgment which is appointed to vindicate the ways of God to man, it is nearly certain that individuals will be known to each other; and if this be the case, is it likely that their mutual knowledge will be immediately obliterated?

5. Is it likely that individuals, whose names and labours bear such a close and extensive connexion with the redemption and history of the church, as those of the prophets and apostles, will be unknown? And if they are known, may it not be inferred that others will be?

6. During our Saviour's abode upon earth, he afforded to the three favoured disciples a glimpse of the heavenly glory: he himself was transfigured, and Moses and Elias descended in celestial brilliancy. These two eminent servants of God were known by the astonished apostles; and if known on Mount Tabor, is it not likely they will be known in the New Jerusalem?

7. Our Saviour, in one of the most impressive of his parables, represents the rich man in torments as knowing Lazarus and Abraham in glory: now though it be a parable, and though each part of the scenery of a parable is not to be considered as conveying some moral sentiment, yet certainly nothing materially and obviously at variance with the truth is ever taught by even the accessories of the chief idea.

8. We find the apostle Paul very frequently consoling himself under the sufferings and persecutions which he had to endure, by the prospect of meeting in heaven those who had been converted by his ministry on earth. His address to the believing Thessalonians is especially in point. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" I do not see how these Christians could be Paul's crown of rejoicing in that day, if they were not known to him.

These are some of the reasons which lead me to suppose, that in heaven the saints will know each other.

I am aware that it is felt by some as an objection to this opinion, that if we shall know those of our friends who are present in glory, we shall of course know if any of our relatives are absent: and that if we derive pleasure from the former consideration we shall experience as much distress from the latter. The only way of solving this difficulty is to suppose that as a perfect knowledge of the Divine Being, and of the wisdom of all his schemes and operations, will constitute a chief part of the happiness of heaven, we shall be so convinced of the equity of his dealings towards the wicked, so divested of all the weakness of the passions, so absorbed in the love of what is right to be done, that our bliss will experience no interruption from the absence of our relatives from the world of glory. This, I acknowledge, is now hard to conceive. The day will declare it.

Assuming then the fact that saints will know each other in the celestial state, let us imagine, my dear children, if indeed the imagination is equal to the effort, what must be the joy attendant on the final meeting of a pious family in heaven. One of the most exquisite delights which we ever experience on earth, is the enjoyment which springs from the first interview with a friend from whom we have been separated; and this delight is in proportion to the time and the distance intervening, and the dangers encountered between the separation and the meeting. What language can describe the thrill of transport, the almost agony of rapture, which the wife experiences in that moment, when she receives a husband back again to her arms who has been away from home for months, has been separated from her by half the circumference of the

globe, and threatened to be torn away from her for ever by the dangers of shipwreck or of battle? Or who shall set forth that scene of domestic bliss which is exhibited when the sailor boy, after having been absent for years, returns from the dangers of the sea, and the horrors of captivity, to the bosom of his family, and exchanges ecstatic greetings with his parents, and his sisters, and his brothers, till all seem ready to expire with excess of joy? What then must be the meeting of these same relatives in heaven, after having been separated by worlds and ages: that meeting, when the mother receives her children to the skies, from this degenerate earth; and the father hails his offspring from the world of death to the regions of life and immortality! Here imagination confesses its weakness. It is a scene we have never witnessed ourselves; nor have we ever conversed with one who has. My heart, while I write, seems to beat quicker at the thought; and the very anticipation raises a commotion of pleasurable feelings in my bosom which no words could enable me to express.

Then remember this meeting is not for a mere transient interview, but for an eternal association. It is to take place in a world, where adieus and farewells are unknown. What an interruption does it now form to the enjoyment of domestic intercourse that the different branches of the family cannot always live beneath the same roof, or in the vicinity of their parents! One member after another goes from the parental abode, and settles at a distance, till counties, and perhaps kingdoms and oceans separate them from each other. Rarely does it happen when the children are numerous and grown to maturity, that they can all meet together.

Occasionally this does occur, on a parent's birth-day, or at the festive season of the year, and then home puts forth all its charms, and pours out in copious streams its pure and precious joys: such a circle is the resort of peace and love. The parents look with ineffable delight upon their children, and their children's children, and see their smiles of love reflected from the faces of the happy group. Piety gives the finishing touch to the picture, when, ere they part, they assemble round the domestic altar, and after reading in that book, which speaks of the many mansions in our Father's house above where the families of the righteous meet to part no more, and after blending their voices in a sacred song of praise to Him who has united them both by ties of nature and of grace, they receive the benedictions and join in the prayers of their saintly and patriarchal father. And he amidst the scene that surrounds him feels a divided heart, one moment thinking he has lived long enough since he has been permitted to witness it, but the next breathing an aspiration to heaven for permission to witness it a few years longer.

This scene, and it is not uncommon, is one of the purest to be found on earth. It is, as nearly as it can be, paradise restored; if it be, as it certainly is, still without the gates of Eden, it is near enough to the sacred enclosure, to receive some of the fruits which drop over the wall. What is wanting here? I answer, Continuance. It is bliss only for a season. It is a day that will be followed by a night. And the heart is often checked in the full tide of enjoyment, in the very meridian of its delights, by looking at the clock, and

counting how rapidly the hours of felicity are rolling away, and how soon the signal of parting will strike. But the meeting in heaven will be eternal. The family will go no more out for ever from the mansion of their Father above. Their interview will not be measured nor limited by time. They will meet for one day, but then that day will be everlasting, for "there is no night there." They will spend eternal ages together. Neither the fear nor the thought of parting will ever flit like a cloud over the orb of their felicity, nor let fall a passing shadow to disturb the sunshine of their breast. "We are met," will they say one to another, "and we shall part no more. Around us is glory, within us is rapture, before us is eternity."

Then add to this the happy circumstances under which they meet, and in which they will dwell together for ever. They will meet as spirits of just men made perfect. The best regulated families on earth will sometimes experience a little interruption of their domestic enjoyment. We all have some imperfection or other, some infirmity of temper, or some impropriety of manner, from which, through want of caution on one part, or want of forbearance on the other, occasional discords will be heard to disturb the harmony of the whole. We see that others are not altogether perfect, and we feel that we are not so. We lament the failings of the rest, and still more lament our own. This prevents perfect domestic bliss, but in heaven we shall all be perfect. We shall see nothing in others to censure, feel nothing in ourselves to correct. We shall have all that veneration and love for each other, which shall arise from the perfection of unsinning holiness. We shall mutually

see reflected the image of God from our characters. There will be every thing lovely to attract esteem, and the most perfect love to show it. Every one will possess the virtue which is loved and the complacency by which it is beloved. Every one, conscious of unmingled purity within, approves and loves himself for that divine image, which in complete perfection, and with untarnished resemblance, is stamped upon his character. Each, in every view which he casts around him, beholds the same glory shining and brightening in the circle of his parents, his brothers, and his sisters. Out of this character grows a series ever varying, ever improving, of all the possible communications of beneficence, fitted in every instance only to interchange and increase the happiness of all. In the sunshine of infinite complacence, the light of the New Jerusalem, the original source of all their own beauty, life, and joy, this happy family will walk for ever.

The joy of that meeting will arise from seeing each other in the possession of all that happiness which God has prepared for them that love him. In a family where genuine affection prevails the happiness of one branch is the happiness of the rest; and each has his felicity multiplied by as many times as there are happy members in the circle. In heaven, where love is perfect, how exquisite will be the bliss of each, arising from being the constant witness of the bliss of all; where the parents will see the children basking in the sunshine of divine love; receiving the warmest expressions of the favour of Christ; shining in the beauties of unsullied holiness; and bounding in the fields of uncreated light: and where the children will see the parents, and each other,

in the same happy circumstances; where each will see all the rest in the full possession of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away; the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory!

How amidst all this unrevealed and inconceivable splendour will the joy be increased by a recollection and enumeration of the benefits conferred by one party, and the obligations incurred by the other. What must be the delight of parents in thus having the fruit of their prayers, instructions, and anxieties constantly before their eyes in the honour and felicity of their glorified children. How happy and grateful will they feel that their solicitude on earth was chiefly exercised in reference to the spiritual and eternal welfare of their offspring, and not wasted upon trifles which had no connexion with piety and immortality! With what thrilling delight will they hear their children ascribing their salvation, so far as instruments are concerned, to them; and giving a high place in their anthems of praise to the names of their father and mother! While, on the other hand, it will raise the felicity of the children to the highest pitch, to see near them their parents, to whom they owe, under God, their possession of heaven. With what mutual interest will both parties retrace the winding ways of Providence, which led to such a termination of the journey of their lives! How will they pause and wonder at the mysterious links, now invisible, but then plainly seen, which connected the events of their history and united them into one perfect whole! Especially with what intense excitement will they mark each effort of parental anxiety for the salvation of the children, and see the individual and collective results of all! The

revolutions of empires, the fate of armies, will then have less to engage and charm their attention than the influence of any one piece of advice ever delivered on earth, which had the smallest influence in impressing their hearts, awakening their consciences, converting their souls, or forming their characters.

What felicity will arise from the sublime converse and employment of such a state! Conceive of a family even on earth, where of all the numerous branches of which it is composed, each one was in dignity a prince, in science a philosopher, in affection a brother, in purity a saint, in meekness a child, all meeting in sublime and affectionate discourse; all employed in exploring together the secrets of nature, and tracing the streams of knowledge; blending, as they proceeded, the ardour of love with the light of truth. But what is this to the heavenly state, where with minds inconceivably more capacious than that of Newton's when he weighed the gravity and measured the distance of the stars, with hearts perfect in holiness, and during ages endless as eternity, we shall converse on all the highest themes which the universe can supply! Think of studying together the laws of creation, the history of all God's providential dealings with mankind, the wonderful scheme of human redemption, the character of the great Jehovah, the person of Jesus Christ, with all that stands connected with the whole range of universal being, and manifestation of the First Cause! What a view does it give us of the felicity of heaven, to think of parents and children engaged with millions all around them, in sounding the depth of that ocean of eternal truth, which is as clear as it is deep; and eternally employed in acts of worship, exercises of benevolence, and

other pleasurable pursuits, now unknown, because unrevealed; and perhaps unrevealed, because not comprehensible by our present limited faculties!

But after all I seem as if I were guilty of presumption in thus attempting to describe that which is quite inconceivable. It does not yet appear what we shall be. We now see through a glass darkly. The Scriptures tell us much of the heavenly state; but they leave much untold respecting it. They give us enough to employ our faith, raise our most lively hopes, and produce a joy unspeakable, and full of glory; but they offer nothing to satisfy our curiosity.

"They bring before us a dim transparency, on the other side of which the images of an obscure magnificence dazzle indistinctly upon the eye; and tell us, that in the economy of redemption, and the provisions of immortality, there is a grandeur commensurate to all that is known of the other works and purposes of the Eternal. They offer us no details, and man, who ought not to attempt a wisdom above that which is written, should be cautious how he puts forth his hand to the drapery of the impenetrable curtain which God in his mysterious wisdom has spread over that region, of which it is but a very small portion that can be known to us."

In this state, amidst all this glory, honour, and felicity, it is my sincere desire, my ardent prayer, my constant endeavour, my supreme pursuit, that your journey, my dear children, and my own, should terminate. Every thing else appears, in comparison of this, as nothing. In the view of this, thrones lose their elevation, crowns their splendour, riches their value, and fame its glory: before the effulgence and magnitude of celestial objects, their grandeur dwindles to an invisible point, and their brightness is but as the shadow of death. Did we not know the depravity of our nature, and that the natural man knows not these things, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned, we must indeed wonder, and inquire what bewildering influence it is, that is exerted on the human mind, by which its attention is so fatally diverted from things unseen and eternal to the shadowy and evanescent forms of things seen and temporal. It is only on this ground that we can account for the folly, the madness, of neglecting the great salvation, and seeking any thing in preference to eternal glory. Dreadful madness! which, though it indulges in the miscalculations of insanity, has none of its excuses. What but this moral insanity could lead men for any object upon earth, to neglect the pursuit, and resign the hope of eternal life?

My children! my children! whom I love with an affection which can be equalled only by that solicitude for your welfare to which it has given rise, and which never sleeps nor rests, receive my admonition, and make eternal happiness the end of your existence. Look at that heaven, which, though but partially revealed, is revealed with such pure brightness on the page of eternal truth, and "on the description of which, so to speak, the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts the whole force and splendour of inspiration;" look at it, that state of inconceivable, infinite, eternal honour and bliss; is there aught on earth, aught of pleasure or of gain, for which you will deliberately resign that crown of unfading glory?

I am anxious, as I have already informed you, that you may live in comfort and respectability on earth. I would have your mind cultivated by learning and science; your manners polished by courtesy; your industry crowned with success: in short, I should be thankful to see you living in comfort, respected and re-

spectable; but above every thing else, I pray, I desire, I long, that you may partake of "that faith, without which it is impossible to please God;" and that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." I have fixed my aim for you high as heaven; and covet for you everlasting life. I love your society on earth, and wish to enjoy it through eternity in the presence of God. I hope I am travelling to that goodly land, of which God has said, he will give it to us for an ininheritance, and I want you to accompany me thither. Reduce me not to the mere consolation of David, who said, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure." Rather let me have to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

May it be granted me to see you choosing the way of wisdom and piety, and remembering your Creator in the days of your youth: giving to all your virtues that stability and beauty which can be derived only from religion; first receiving by faith, and then adorning by holiness, the doctrine of God your Saviour. Then will my highest ambition as a parent be gratified, my most painful solicitude relieved. I shall watch your progress amidst the vicissitudes of life, with a calm and tranquil mind, assured that your piety will be your protector amidst the dangers of prosperity; or your comforter amidst the ills of adversity. If called to follow your bier, and weep upon your sepulchre, I shall only consider you as sent forward on the road, to await my arrival at our Father's house; or if called according to the order of nature, to go down first into the dark valley of the shadow of death, I shall find the agonies of our se-

paration assuaged, and the gloom of my dying chamber irradiated by those bright visions of glory, which connect themselves with the prospect of the meeting of a pious family in the heavenly world.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, thou fillest earth with thy goodness, hell with thy justice, and heaven with thy glory. I bless and magnify thy holy name, for the wondrous and inconceivable provision thou hast made for the happiness of thy people in the celestial world. Thou art not ashamed to be called their God, because thou hast prepared for them a city. I thank thee for all thou hast revealed of the felicities, honours, and employments of that exalted and eternal state of holy and happy existence. I am thankfully content to know that it does not yet appear what I shall be, for this intimates it is a bliss too great for human language to express or human intellects to comprehend. May I be thankfully content to wait in partial ignorance of this ineffable glory. Strengthen in me that faith which is the confidence of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen; and help me to maintain a living hope of this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. Oh, suffer me not to be so taken up with any earthly happiness, however lawful, as to neglect the pursuit of heavenly delights. Show me the path of life, and help me at last to possess the fulness of joy which is in thy presence, and the pleasures for evermore which are at thy right hand.

Thou hast already conducted some of my dear relatives to that happy world. My beloved parents I believe will be for ever in those mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for his people. O let our whole family, now so separated and scattered, be all then gathered together unto Christ. Mercifully grant that after our dispersion we may be re-united round the throne of thy glory. Let me not, I implore thee, be absent at that blissful convocation. The very idea is agony. It fills me with unspeakable anguish to think of being separated for ever from those with whom I have been so closely united upon earth. What! to be torn away from my kind father, my loving tender mother, and my affectionate brothers and sisters, and while

they are praising thee in heaven, for me to be weeping, wailing, and gnashing my teeth in hell! Great God, forbid it: my nature shudders at the thought.

And now that I am closing this volume, and closing it with such a bright vision of celestial glory, as the meeting and eternal association and intercourse of a pious family in heaven, I earnestly pray that the design of my parents in placing the book in my hands may be accomplished in the salvation of my immortal soul. May I never forget what I have here learnt; nor fail to practise what I remember. If I do not act thus, it had been better I had never seen the book, as it will be a savour of death unto death unto my soul, by increasing my guilt now, and adding to the weight of my condemnation hereafter. Lord have mercy upon me, and write all these things upon my heart. Lord, have mercy upon me, and incline my heart to keep thy laws. Let the perusal of this volume contribute, by thy sovereign grace and effectual blessing, to the accomplishment of my own desire and that of my parents, that I may be one of a whole family that shall meet at last in heaven. Grant this, through our Lord Jesus Christ: to whom, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, be equal and eternal praise. Amen.

[The following chapters were omitted in the later editions, but many who have been accustomed to read them may be glad to see them preserved here.]

THE PERIOD BETWEEN LEAVING SCHOOL AND MANHOOD.

YOUNG people, while at school, generally look forward with much desire, and longing anticipation, to the happy time when they shall throw off the restraints of the seminary, and enter upon engagements to prepare them for their future station in life. They are seldom aware of the immense importance of this period of their existence; and but rarely consider, that it is at this time the character usually assumes its permanent form.

I will suppose, my dear children, that you have quitted the school-room, for the warehouse, the office, or the shop; exchanged grammars and dictionaries for journals and ledgers; and the researches of learning for the pursuits of business. All is new, and all is interesting. Youthful feelings are subsiding into something like a consciousness of approaching manhood; and the comparative insignificance of the schoolboy is giving way to the incipient importance of the man of business. At this very point and period of your history, it becomes you to halt and reflect. Instead of being led on in joyous thoughtlessness, by the new scenes that are

opening before and around you, and leaving your habits and your character to be formed by accident or by chance, I beseech you to ponder on the very critical circumstances in which you are now placed.

The period which elapses from fourteen to eighteen years of age, is indeed the crisis of your history and character. It is inconceivably the most eventful and influential term of your whole mortal existence. Comparing the mind to substances which, under the influence of heat, are capable of being moulded to any form, it is at this period of its history that it is in the most suitable temperature and consistency to yield to the plastic influence of external causes, and to receive its permanent form and character: before this it is too fluid and yielding, and afterwards too stiff and unbending. This, this is the very time, when the ever variable emotions, passions, and pursuits of boyhood, begin to exhibit something like the durable and settled forms of manhood.

In reference to the affairs of this life; if a young person ever become a good mechanic, or a good tradesman, he gains the elements of his future excellence about this period. So it is in poetry, painting, learning. Before this, the first decisive and unequivocal traits of genius sometimes appear, and even after this, they are sometimes developed; but generally speaking, it is from the age of fourteen to eighteen, that the marks of future eminence are put forth. It is the vernal season of mind, and habit, and genius. The same remarks will apply to the formation of character. Then the passions acquire new vigour, and exert a mighty influence; then the understanding begins to assert its independence, and to think for itself; then there is on the part of the mind,

a declaration of its liberty and a casting away of the trammels of education; then there is a self-confidence and a self-reliance which have received as yet few checks from experience; then the social impulse is felt, and the youth looks round for companions and friends; then the eye of parental vigilance, and the voice of parental caution, are generally at a distance. Then, in fact, the future character is formed. At this time, generally speaking, religion is chosen or abandoned; and the heart is given to God or the world. Can any thing be more awfully important, than these reflections to those who are yet about this age? You are now deciding for both worlds at once. You are now choosing to become a Christian on earth and a seraph in heaven, or a worldling here, and a fiend hereafter. You are now setting out on a journey which is to conduct you to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, or to the blackness of darkness for ever. Yes, the starting point for the realms of eternal day, or the regions of eternal night, has generally been found to be within the period which I have named.

These remarks apply more strictly to young men than to persons of the opposite sex: inasmuch, as females generally remain at home, under the eye, and voice, and example of parental piety, and are far less exposed than boys to the temptations and sins of youth. All young men, therefore, of this age, should pause and reflect thus: "I am now arrived at that period, which must be considered as the most eventful era of my whole existence; when my character both for time and eternity, will in all probability be formed; when I may be said to be commencing the career which is to terminate in heaven or in hell; as well as the path which is to lead me to

respectability and comfort, or to depression and poverty in the present world. How critical my age! How important that I should consider wisely my situation, and decide aright!"

Permit me to give you a little advice in some measure suited to your circumstances.

1. Most sacredly observe the sabbath and constantly attend the means of grace. Let nothing induce you to prostitute the hallowed day to worldly pleasure. Never listen to the enticements of a companion, who would tempt you, even once, to forsake the house of God. Abandon such an acquaintance. He is unfit for you and will ruin you. Sabbath-breaking is a sin of most hardening tendency. When tempted to commit it, imagine you hear the awful voice of divine prohibition, followed with the loud deep groan of a holy father, and the exclamation of a pious mother, "Oh, my son! my son! do not pierce my heart with anguish." Attach yourselves to a sound evangelical ministry, and listen not to those who subvert the very foundations of the gospel. Avoid those preachers who oppose all that is peculiar to Christianity.

2. Keep up attention to the private duties of religion.

Never let a day pass without reading the scriptures, and private prayer. While these practices are continued I have hope of you: they shew that piety has still some hold upon your heart. Secure some portion of every day, if it be but a quarter of an hour in the morning, and in the evening, for this most important duty. Should you not have a chamber to yourselves let not the company of others prevent your keeping up this practice. It would be better, however, in this case to retire to your room when you can have it to yourself.

3. Be very careful in the selection of companions. All that I have before said on the subject of company applies with great force to this period of your life. It is now that the mischief of evil associations will be felt in all its devastating influence. One bad companion at this time, when the character is assuming its permanent form, will give a most fatal direction. Your company will probably be courted; but resist every overture which is not made by individuals of well-known unbending virtue.

4. Strive to excel in the business or profession to which your life is to be devoted. It is an altogether laudable ambition for a man to aspire to eminence in his secular vocation. Be not satisfied with mediocrity in any thing that is lawful. You should endeavour to be distinguished even as a tradesman. It will give you weight in society, and thus by increasing your influence augment the means of your usefulness. A dolt, however pious he may be, possesses but little weight of character. Give your mind therefore to business. Penetrate into all its secrets, comprehend all its principles, study all its bearings. Care nothing about pleasure; but find your recreation in your employment. It is astonishing how few rise to eminence in their calling, either in trade or in the professions. The summits are gained by a very small number; the multitude grovel below. Why? Because they did not seek nor begin to ascend during their apprenticeship. They did not give themselves wholly to their business, during this important season. Excellence in any department of human affairs can be looked for, only from diligent and early culture. Industry and close application will keep you out of the way of temptation. Let your mind be occupied with busi-

ness, and there will be neither leisure nor inclination for polluting amusements.

5. If your attention to business leaves any time unoccupied, I advise you to carry on a course of reading. Make companions of useful books, and you will need no other. And as it is every man's chief praise to excel in his own profession, let your reading bear a relation to that in which you are engaged.

6. If you can find a pious and intelligent associate, embrace the opportunity of innocent and pleasurable companionship; "for as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Carry on some course of intellectual improvement with such a friend, and both give and receive the stimulus which fellowship affords.

Again and again remember the tremendous importance which attaches to the period to which this chapter more particularly refers; and believing, as you must, that it is from fourteen to eighteen the character, in relation to both worlds, is generally formed, judge what manner of persons ye ought to be at that time, if you wish to be a good tradesman and real Christian upon earth, and a glorified and happy spirit in heaven.

THE CHOICE OF A COMPANION FOR LIFE.

"The first blessing," says Bishop Taylor, "God gave to man was society; and that society was a marriage; and that marriage was confederate by God himself, and hallowed by a blessing. The first miracle that Jesus Christ ever performed, was to do honour to a wedding, which he graced with his presence, and supplied with a part of its provision. Celibacy, like the fly in the heart of an apple dwells in a perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined, and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house and gathers sweetness from every flower, and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world.

"But then with how much caution, and extreme care, and sound discretion, and fervent prayer, ought this union to be formed; for they who enter into the state of marriage, cast a die of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity. Life or death, felicity or a lasting sorrow, are in the power of marriage. A woman indeed ventures most, for she hath no sanctuary to retire to from an evil husband; she must dwell upon her sorrow which her own folly hath produced; and she is more under it, because her tormentor hath a warrant of prerogative, and the woman may complain to God as subjects do of tyrant princes, but otherwise she hath no appeal in the causes of unkindness. And though the man can run from many hours of his sadness, yet he must return to it again; and when he sits among his neighbours he remembers the objection that lies in his bosom, and he sighs deeply."

Who then that is wise would not be slow to decide where so much depends upon the decision; and grow up

in a habit of putting the affections and the imagination under the control of the judgment? If it be important to exercise deliberation in reference to those connexions which may be dissolved at pleasure, how much more in the case of those which nothing can terminate but the stroke of death!

The first piece of advice I offer is, not to think of this all-important affair too soon, nor suppose it necessary that a young person of eighteen or nineteen should begin to pay and receive particular attentions. Do not court the subject, or permit your imagination to be for ever dwelling upon it. Rather put it from you than bring it near. Repress that visionary and romantic turn of mind, which considers the whole space that lies between you and the altar as a dreary waste, all beyond it as a paradise: in innumerable instances the very reverse has been the case, and the exchange of a father's for a husband's house has been like the departure of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden to a wide uncultivated wilderness.

"The stags in the Greek epigram, whose knees were clogged with frozen snow upon the mountains, came down to the brooks of the vallies, hoping to thaw their joints with the waters of the stream; but there the frost overtook them, and bound them fast in ice, till the young herdsmen took them in their stranger snare. It is the unhappy chance of some persons, finding many inconveniences upon the mountains of single life, they descend into the vallies of marriage to refresh their troubles, and there they enter into fetters, and are bound to sorrow by the cords of a man's or a woman's peevishness; and the worst of the evil is, that they have to thank their own follies, for they fell into the snare by entering an improper way;" and I may be permitted to add, by entering it too early, and too hastily.

It is on this ground that novels, the most pernicious mental poison the press can disseminate, are so much to be deprecated; they inflame the imagination with vision-

ary scenes and adventurous exploits on a subject which the heart ought never to approach but under the guidance of a sober judgment. Young people should be cautious in their social intercourse of converting this subject into matter of merriment, much more should they beware of aiding and abetting each other in the formation of such connexions. Never, never be the confidante of individuals who are engaged in an affair of this kind unknown to their parents: or be the medium of communication between them. Third persons who have been ambitious of the honour of match-making have often done mischief to others, which, however they afterwards lamented it, they were never able to repair. I know some whose lives have been embittered, and ever will be, by seeing the rueful consequences of ill-fated unions of which they were in great measure the authors.

My next admonition is, Take extreme care of hasty entanglements. Neither give nor receive particular attentions, which cannot be mistaken, till the matter has been well weighed by you. Keep your affections shut up at home in your hearts while your judgment aided by prudence prepares to make its report.

When the subject comes fairly before your attention, make it immediately known to your parents. Conceal nothing from them. Abhor the very idea of clandestine connexions, as a violation of every duty you owe to God and man. There is nothing heroic in a secret correspondence. The silliest girls and weakest men can maintain it, and have been most frequently engaged in it. Spurn the individual who would come between you and your natural guardians. Hearken to the opinions of your parents with all the deference which is due to it. Rare

are the cases in which you should act in opposition to their wishes.

Be guided in this affair by the dictates of prudence. Never think of forming a connexion till there is a rational prospect of temporal provision. I am not quite sure that the present age is in this respect more prudent than the past. It is all very pretty and pleasing for two young people to sing of love in a cottage, and draw picturesque views of two affectionate hearts struggling together amidst the difficulties of life: but these pictures are seldom realised. Connexions that begin in imprudence generally end in wretchedness. Young people who marry without the consent of their parents, when that consent is withheld not from caprice but discretion, often find that they are not united like two doves, by a silken thread, but like two of Sampson's foxes, with a firebrand between them. I call it little else than wickedness to marry without a rational prospect of temporal support.

Right motives should ever lead to this union. To marry for property only, is most sordid and vile. We are informed that in some parts of the East Indies, it is thought no sin for a woman to sell her virtue at the price of an elephant: and how much more virtuous in reality is she, who accepts a man for the sake of his fortune? Where there is no affection at the hymeneal altar there must be perjury of the most awful kind; and he who returns from church with this guilt upon his conscience has brought with him a curse to his habitation, which is likely to make his prize of little worth. When such persons have counted their money and their sorrows together, how willingly with the price of their slavery would they buy again their liberty and,

so they could be released from each other give up all claim to the golden fetter which has chained them together.

Personal attractions alone are not enough to form a ground of union. It is an ill band of affections to tie two hearts together by a little thread of red and white. Few things are more superficial, or evanescent, than beauty. The fairest flower often fades the soonest. There ought to be personal attachment I admit, but that attachment should be to the mind as well as the body. Except we discern something lovely that will remain when the colour of the cheek has faded, and the fire of the eye is extinguished, and the symmetry of the form has been destroyed, we are engaging our affections to an object which we may live to witness only as a sort of ghost of that beauty which we once loved. There should be temper and qualities of mind which we think will please us, and satisfy us, when the novelties and charms of personal attractions have faded for ever.

In the case of pious young people, neither personal nor mental qualifications, nor the union of both, should be deemed a sufficient ground of union in the absence of religion. The directions of scripture on this head are very explicit. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; and what communion hath light with darkness? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" "She is at liberty to marry whom she will, only in the Lord." This is a declaration of the will of God. It is a clear unequivocal annunciation of his mind on the subject. Viewed as advice it is wise, for it is given by one who is infallible; but it is more than advice, it is the command of one who has authority

to govern, the right to judge, and the power to punish. He who instituted marriage has thus laid down the law, as to the principles upon which it is to be conducted. Pious young persons are here commanded to unite themselves only with those who appear to be partakers of similar dispositions. An infraction of this law is followed with many evils. It offends others, it discourages ministers, grieves the church, is a stumbling-block to the weak, and is a source of inexpressible regret to parents. "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah;" and Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these who are the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" This is deeply affecting, and it is but the feeling of every truly christian parent concerning his children when they act as Esau did.

But consider the influence of an unsuitable connexion on yourselves. We all need helps not hindrances to heaven. Our personal religion requires props to keep it up, not weights to drag it down. In this case, not to be helped is to be hindered. The constant companionship of an irreligious husband or wife must be most injurious. The example is always near, it is the example of one we love, and which has on that account the greater power over us. Affection is assimilating; it is easy to imitate, difficult to oppose those we love. Your own religion is put in awful peril daily. But if you should escape unhurt, still what sorrow will such an association produce. What a dreadful, heart-

rending idea, to love and live with those from whom you fear you shall be separated for ever: to be moving hourly to a point when you shall be torn from each other for eternity. How sweet the consciousness which lives in the bosom of a pious couple, that if separated to-morrow, they have an eternity to spend together in heaven: but the reverse of these feelings will be your's, if you marry not "in the Lord."

Besides, how many interruptions of conjugal felicity will you experience. Dissimilarity of taste, even in lesser matters, sometimes proves a great bar to happiness. Between those who are so nearly related, and so constantly together, there should be as great a likeness of disposition as possible. But to be unlike in the most momentous of all concerns, in an affair of perpetual recurrence! Is this the way to be happy? Will the strongest affection surmount this obstacle, or ought the experiment to be made?

And then, think on the influence it will have on all your domestic arrangements, on your servants, and especially on your children, should you have any. You will be left alone, and perhaps counteracted, in the great business of family religion. Your plans may be thwarted, your instructions neglected, your influence opposed. Your offspring, partaking of the evil nature common to their species, are much more likely to follow the worldly example than the spiritual one.

The scripture is replete with instances of the evil resulting from the neglect of religious marriages. This was the sin which filled the old world with wickedness, and prepared it for the deluge. Some of Lot's daughters married in Sodom, and perished in its overthrow. Ishmael and Esau married irreligious persons, and were

both rejected, and turned persecutors. The first captivity of the Jews after their settlement in the Holy Land is ascribed to this cause. What did David suffer from this evil? The case of Solomon is a warning to all ages. This was the sin that Ezra so grievously lamented, so sharply reproved; and in which he was followed by Nehemiah.

But I need not go to scripture for instances of this nature: they stand thick all around us. What misery, what irregularities, what wickedness have I seen or known to exist in some families, where the parents were divided on the subject of religion.

Young people often attempt to persuade themselves on very insufficient grounds that the objects of their regard are pious. They evade the law of God, by considering them as hopeful, enquiring. But are they decided? In some cases they wish them to enter into church fellowship, as a kind of proof that they are godly. At other times they believe that although their friends are not quite decided in their religious character, yet by being united with them they will become so. But are we to do evil that good may come? Is marriage to be considered one of the means of grace? It is much more probable that such a connexion will do injury to the pious party, than good to the unconverted one. I have seen the experiment of marrying an unregenerate person with the hope of converting him often tried, but scarcely ever succeed. Dr. Doddridge says he never knew one instance in which this end was gained.

I do not mean to say that religion, though indispensable, is the only prerequisite in the individual to

whom you should unite yourselves. Temper, age, rank, mind, ability to preside over domestic cares, should all be taken into the account. Many, when expostulated with on their being about to form an unsuitable connexion, have replied, "O he is a very good man and what more would you have?" Many things: a good disposition, industrious habits, a probability of supporting a family, a suitableness of age and station, a congeniality of general taste. To marry a person without piety, is sinful; to marry for piety alone, is foolish.

Again I entreat you to recollect that the marriage union is for life; and if it be badly formed is an evil from which there is no refuge but the grave, no cure but in death. An unsuitable connexion, as soon as it is found to be so, throws a gloom, not merely over some particular periods of our time, and portions of our history, but over the whole: it raises a dark and wide-spreading cloud which extends over the whole horizon of a man's prospect, and behind which he sees the sun of his prosperity go down for ever while it is yet noon. It is a subject on which the most delicate reserve, the most prudent caution, and the most fervent prayer, are indispensably necessary. It is not, as it is too frequently thought and treated, a mere sportive topic to enliven discourse with, or an enchanted ground for the imagination to rove in, or an object for a sentimental mind to court and dally with; it is a serious business, inasmuch as the happiness of many is concerned in it; their happiness not for a part of their lives, but the whole of it; not for time only, but for eternity. And, therefore, although I would not surround the altar of Hymen with scarecrows, nor invest it with shades as deep as those of

the sepulchre, which men are more afraid than eager to approach; so neither would I adorn it with the garlands of folly till I have rendered it as frivolous as the ball-room, where men and women are paired for the dance with no regard to congeniality of mind, with no reference to future happiness, and no object but amusement.

THE CHIEF END OF LIFE: A NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS TO YOUNG MEN, FOR 1850,

BY THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

"This one thing I do."

We meet you to-day, young men, with our sincere and friendly congratulations, and in no merely formal or simulated manner, offer you the compliments of the season, and "Wish you a happy new year," more than this, a happy life, and still beyond this, a happy eternity. Time, with ceaseless flow rolls onward, and is ever bearing you on its resistless stream to the boundless ocean of eternity. Yes, to eternity; yet not to eternal annihilation, but to everlasting conscious existence. As you stand upon the threshold of another year pause and ponder; the past is for ever gone. Survey the scene before you, and learn your destiny, your dignity, your duty. An interminable prospect of perpetual existence, a vista of endless ages, yes, and of bliss too, opens before you if you adopt, in the meaning he attached to it, the motto of the Apostle which heads this address, and say, in reference to that object, this one thing I do: he intended by it, not his office as an ambassador of Christ, but his final salvation as an immortal being.

There is something interesting in seeing a rational creature select one object from the many which surround him, holding it up to public notice, with the declaration, "for this I live," and from that moment pursuing it with the ardour of a lover, the fidelity of a servant, the courage of a hero, and the constancy of a martyr. Such a power of abstraction and concentration is a fine spectacle. But then the object selected should be worthy of it, and should repay it. Man has but one life to spend, and he should be careful, anxiously yea almost painfully careful, not to throw it away upon an undeserving object. Think of his coming to the close of his brief and troubled sojourn in this world with the melancholy confession, "Life with me has been a lost adventure."

We would help you to guard against this catastrophe, and assist you so to select your object, and lay your plan, that after a prosperous, happy, and useful life, even death itself, instead of being the wreck, shall prove the consummation, of your hopes, and be your eternal gain.

This address comes to you from a body of young men, entitled "The Young Men's Christian Association," who are banded together by the ties of a holy brotherhood to countenance and assist one another in pursuing and securing the highest and noblest end of human existence. We have made our choice; our judgment and conscience approve the selection; it stands continually before us in the wilderness of life, visible, grand, and distinct, like the Pyramids of Egypt to the traveller in the desert; and in the exercise of a benevolence which the object itself inspires, we are

anxious to engage others of our age, sex, and circumstances in the same pursuit.

Our one thing, our chief end of life, is the same as the Apostle's, the pursuit of glory, honour, immortality; our hope is the possession of eternal life; and our way of seeking it "a patient continuance in well-doing." There it is before you in all its simplicity, and, we may add, in all its sublimity. Can language furnish such another collocation of words; or thought, such another association of things; "Glory," that after which millions have panted, and to which the strongest aspirations of the human soul have been directed; "Honour," or renown, which has inflamed the ambition of many of the loftiest spirits of our race, and made them willing to sacrifice ease, time, wealth, and too often, principle and conscience; "Immortality," after which "the whole creation travaileth in pain together until now;" and all these merging in that one immense and infinite possession, Eternal Life. Such is our one thing. Have we any reason to be ashamed of our choice? If this be little, where in all the universe is anything great? If this be degrading, where can anything be found to elevate?

There are many secondary and subordinate ends of life, but there can be only one that is supreme. We know that we are rational creatures, and that we ought to improve our minds by reading and study; that we are to be tradesmen, and are striving to excel in the knowledge of our business; that we are, in all probability, to be at the head of families, and are preparing to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" that we are members of society, and are endeavouring

to form in ourselves the character of the good citizen, and seeking to act well our part in the great drama of human life. We hope we neglect none of these things; but then we are entirely convinced and duly impressed with the thought that there is something besides and above all these things; that we are God's creatures, continually dependent upon Him, and ought to seek first of all to please our Creator, that we are sinners, and feel it our most pressing business to obtain salvation, and that we are immortal creatures, and must, therefore, surely consider it to be our most momentous interest to possess eternal life. This great object then we have adopted for ourselves, and now propose to you as the chief end of life.

Such a decision rests of course upon our conviction of the truth of God's revealed will in the Holy Scriptures. If these are human inventions, we are deluded and are the dupes of imposture; but if they are a Divine revelation, we are right, and are following the dictates of reason in yielding to those of religion. Aware of the abounding of infidelity and false philosophy we have examined this subject for ourselves, and have arrived at the conclusion that a volume, accredited by proofs so numerous, various, and harmonious, must be what it claims to be, the word of God. In the miracles of our Lord and his apostles, so diversified and so multiplied, and wrought not in private but in public, not merely before the eyes of friends but of foes; in the fulfilment of ancient predictions too extraordinary in their nature, delivered too long beforehand, to be the contrivances of foresight, and too many to be resolved into curious coincidences; in the success of Christianity by the labours of fishermen, and against the secular

powers of the world; in the history of the Jews; in the contents of the Bible itself, so extraordinary, so sublime, and so pure; in the changes which Christianity has wrought; in its continuance to the present day, notwithstanding all the enemies with which it has had to contend; and in its present attitude as now preparing, under the auspices of the most learned, scientific, wealthy, and powerful nations of the earth, for universal conquest: in all these views of it we see proofs, each strong in itself and possessing unitedly a cumulative force, which satisfy us, whatever difficulties in other respects may be presented from the nature of the subjects, that this is surely the word of God: and if anything else were wanting to complete the chain of evidence, we find this in the change it has wrought in us, and which that precious volume calls, "The witness in ourselves."

Guided then by this volume, we have been led to see that the salvation of the immortal soul, and a preparation for heaven, form the great end of man's life upon earth: in other words, that religion is our great business in this world.

By religion we do not mean merely the adoption of a creed, the performance of a round of ceremonies, or the observance of certain ordinances; but in addition to all this, and as the animating principle of all, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" a mind, heart, conscience, and practice regulated by the word of God; in short, the new birth, justification by faith, and a holy life.

This, we again say, is with us the chief end of our existence, and we now hold it forth for your adoption in reference to yourselves, and on examination it will be found to contain all that such an object

should include, and we entreat you to give to the following statement your most serious and devout consideration.

That which is intended to be the chief end of life must be in itself a legitimate object of pursuit, and must be lawful both in the sight of God and man, such as the law of God and our own consciences shall approve. To choose any other would involve us in perpetual rebellion against God, and in conflict with ourselves. To set up a forbidden object of pursuit would make our own bosom the seat of perpetual intestine warfare. Now that religion is legitimate need not be proved. It is, in fact, the only thing which, as a supreme end, is lawful. Many others are lawful as subordinate ends, but as primary, chief, and ultimate, they are forbidden and made contraband. For what saith our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

That which is the chief end of life should be Appropriate to our own situation and circumstances, a something that appertains to us as individuals, and in which we have a personal interest. No one can be expected to set up as the object of existence that in which he has no interest, and in the results of which he has no share. It is very affecting to see a man wearing out life, and exhausting his energies, upon something which has no just claim upon his attention, and does not connect itself at all, or but very slightly and remotely, with his interests. This cannot be said of religion in reference to you, for it is your business; it appertains to you; to none more than to you. You have each of you, an immortal soul which must be saved or lost; and only by religion can it be saved. To you the admonition is addressed, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of

thy youth." There is not in our world an individual to whom this subject more belongs than you, or on whom it has stronger claims.

The chief object must be something Important. As a rational creature a man could not be justified in setting up a mere trifle as the end and purpose of existence. It marks a low and abject state of mind, or at any rate, great puerility of taste, to allow the thoughts feelings and aspirations, to be attracted, as to their centre, to a mere triviality or impertinence. God has given to man noble faculties, however corrupted and enslaved they may be by sin; and to see them all devoted to some mere petty business, as their supreme aim, is an affecting and a humiliating spectacle. We are anxious that both you and ourselves should be living for something worthy of our nature, something congruous to our powers of intellect, will, heart, memory, and conscience; something that shall make us conscious we are not living below ourselves. And where can we find anything that answers to this so well as religion, salvation, eternal life? This is not only really to live for immortality, but is the only way to do so in the fullest sense of the term. Literature, science, philosophy, and the arts, in this relation, must all yield to religion. This is to have fellowship with "the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs;" this is to enter into bonds with the holy of every age, country, and church; yea, it is to rise into "the fellowship of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ."

It must be something which is in harmony with God's chief end in placing us in this world. God has placed us here; he has an end in doing so; and nothing

ought to be our chief end but what is consonant with his. To neglect this is to wage perpetual war with the Divine will; and we know who has said, "Woe be to him that contendeth with his Maker." Would you engage in such a conflict? Would you run contrary to his will, and let your schemes be ever in opposition to his? What a fearful reflection for any one to make, "I am opposing God by my mode of life!" On the contrary, how ennobling and comforting the thought, "I am of one mind with my Maker!" No man can say this who is not making religion his great business, and living for the salvation of his soul; for this is God's chief end in sending us into this world.

That which we select as the main business of life must be something Attainable. In setting out upon the pursuit of any object, much more our supreme one, we should ascertain that it is within our reach, and one which we may hope, by taking proper steps, and using proper diligence, to obtain. It is a grievous sight to behold a person following some mere vision of imagination, bestowing immense labour and wealth, and absorbing nearly all his time, in the pursuit of an object, which everybody besides himself clearly sees is beyond his attainment. "Poor man," we exclaim, "he is beating the air, running after shadows, aiming at impossibilities." But this cannot be affirmed of religion and salvation; all the duties and privileges of the one, all the glories and the felicities of the other, are within your reach. It is the transcendent excellence of religion to be of all things the most valuable in its nature, and at the same time the most certain of attainment by all who seek it earnestly, perseveringly, and scripturally. The uncertainties and disappointments incident to other

matters, are not experienced in regard to this. The language of Christ is, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Luther said he loved the Bible on account of those pronouns, "mine" and "thine." He might have added, and because of those verbs "will" and "shall." In other matters there is only possibility or probability; but here there is certainty. You may succeed in business, you will succeed in religion.

The one great object of life should preserve an Undying and Unchanging importance and value through every change of existence and every vicissitude of circumstances. It would be unwise for any one to embark all his energies, time, wealth, and interest, in the pursuit of an object which, however important it may be to him at one time, and in one situation, would be of no importance to him in very many others in which he might, and, in all probability, would be placed. Not a few have engaged in such folly; and after immense pains, at some future period have had to say, "After all I have done, I have outlived the value of my object; whatever service it may have been to me at one time, it is of no service to me now." The one thing then must, as to its importance, be commensurate with our whole existence. How strictly does this apply to religion. It will be the guide of our youth, the comfort of our manhood, and the staff of our old age. If we succeed in life, it will preserve us from the snares of prosperity; and if we fail, it will be our solace in adversity. Should we be exposed to the temptations of bad company, it will be our shield; or, if we should dwell much alone, it will be the comforter of our solitude. It will guide us in the choice of a companion for life, sweeten the cup of connubial happiness,

and survive the rupture of every earthly tie. It will refresh us with its cooling shade amidst the heat and burden of life's busy day, be the evening star of our declining years, and our lamp in the dark valley of the shadow of death, and then rise with us as our eternal portion in the realms of immortality. Like its Divine author, "It is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Whatever is the supreme end, must be in harmony with, and not in opposition to the secondary and subordinate ends of life. Duties cannot clash, obligations cannot be in antagonism. It can be no man's duty to do two things which are at that time directly and necessarily opposed to each other. There are situations and circumstances in which, what in other circumstances would be a duty, ceases to be any longer such, because of the presence of an object of superior claims. Now that cannot be the great object of life, which prevents us from seeking even lesser ones in themselves legitimate and proper. It is somewhat repulsive to see a person absorbed in an object, by the nature of which, as well as by the time devoted to it, he is unfitted for, and disinclined to, the pursuit of any thing else. The claims of his own personal interests, of his family, of his country, of his species, are all superseded and forgotten in the paramount demands of that one all engrossing pursuit. By that one pursuit he has unfitted himself for, and detached himself from, every thing else. This cannot be right. If religion were indeed what too many of the votaries of superstition represent it, a gloomy seclusion in monasteries, convents, and hermitages, where every tie that binds us to this world is severed, it could not be of God, nor would it be

the supreme end of life: but this is not Christianity. There is not a single legitimate end of life which is in the smallest degree interfered with by this high and sacred business. No man is made the worse citizen, master, servant, husband, father, son, or brother, by attending to this momentous subject. Religion assists, instead of hindering, every lawful interest that man has on earth. It sheds a benignant smile upon all his proper pursuits, and stretches out a helping hand to assist him in carrying them forward. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." The beautiful allegory of Solomon will be found true. "Wisdom [religion] is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her."

That which is selected as the chief end of life, should amply reward the labour of pursuit. It should not when realized lead the possessor in a tone, and with feelings of bitter disappointment, to exclaim, "And is this all?" To spend life with no reward at all, or with no adequate reward, is exceedingly to be dreaded and deprecated. It is a loss and a sacrifice for which there can be no compensation. Now, whatever may be said of the inadequacy of any other object of human pursuit to remunerate the anxiety and labour of acquiring it, no such imputation belongs to this. It is the supreme good. Religion is its own reward. We ourselves, from whom this address goes forth, can testify this. If we

were ever under the delusion that piety is inimical to happiness, we have long since found by experience that it is delusion. This has been alleged only by those who have never tried it by personal experience; we have tried both sides, the pleasures of the world, and the pleasures of religion; and have found that between them there is all the difference that lies between mere amusement and true happiness. In the days of our mirth and folly we were diverted, now we are satisfied; then we said, in ignorant anxiety, "Who will show us any good?" knowing neither what happiness was, nor how it was to be obtained, but still supposing it must be something to be seen, handled, or tasted, a mere gratification of the senses and appetites. Now we are enabled, intelligently and contentedly to say, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou art the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light." We once had joys, aptly described as "the crackling of thorns beneath a pot," a mere blaze, noisy, smoky, and transient: we now have bliss like "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And all this is only the earnest of that perfect and eternal felicity which we look for when we shall arrive in "the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore." Such are our views of the great object of existence; and such we now commend to your most serious attention.

Young men, our contemporaries and coevals, we conjure you to give this subject your serious consideration. You, like ourselves, are just setting out on life's eventful journey. O say, should there be no plan laid down, no purpose formed for such a course? Shall life be aimless,

objectless, meaningless? What life? Shall we trust to incidents and casualities as they spring up for our scheme of action? Shall we float down the stream of existence like chips or straws, and lie at the mercy of whatever can lay hold upon us? Shall mere chance form our character, select our objects, guide our conduct? Remember, we can have but one life. All, all, for time and for eternity too, is staked upon that one cast of the die, and embarked in that one adventure. Character and destiny for this world and the next are involved in this one life. "The wheels of time are not made to roll backwards;" nor is the experiment for eternity ever to be repeated. A misspent life can never be spent over again. A fault committed in reference to the end of existence can never be rectified. It is a mistake on which death sets the seal of eternity, a mistake which will require everlasting ages to understand and deplore it.

If you hesitate about our choice of the end of existence, will you allow us respectfully and affectionately to inquire what you would propose instead of it? What have you found so immensely valuable, that it is more worthy of your pursuit than that which we have set before you? If it be indeed better than ours, more deserving the regard of a rational, moral, and immortal being than religion and eternal salvation, tell it to us, that we may rise to a higher dignity and bliss than we have yet reached.

Do you say that your object is "To succeed in business, and to obtain wealth?" We are not indifferent to this as a subordinate object, and we believe, as we have already said, that our religion will rather help than hinder us in the attainment of it. But as a supreme one, it is too uncertain as to its attainment,

too unsatisfying as regards its nature, and too precarious as to its tenure, and too short-lived as to its continuance, to be our supreme end. We have not seen much of life, but we have seen enough to learn that many fail where one succeeds, and that the few who succeed seem by no means the happiest of their species: and we have also been often impressed and affected by the spectacle of the successful competitor for business and wealth, cut off just when the time had arrived for enjoying his gains and luxuriating in ease upon the profits of his industry. The announcement made to the successful man, congratulating himself upon his acquisitions and his prospects, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided," has often rung in our ears.

Is it pleasure you propose as the end of life? No man is less likely to enjoy pleasure than he who lives for it, who makes it a business and profession. We have not only heard and read, but have seen, that a taste for pleasure in youth is the way to poverty in manhood and misery in old age.

We would here present you with one of the most affecting scenes ever exhibited even in the martyrology of pleasure's victims. It is taken from the death-bed of that accomplished poet, and as accomplished libertine, Lord Byron; a man in whom the darkest passions of the soul, the loftiest powers of imagination, and the grossest propensities of man's animal nature, struggled for pre-eminence. One who was a spectator of the scene thus writes:

"He felt assured that his constitution had been irretrievably ruined by intemperance; that he was a worn-out man; and that his

muscular power was gone. Flashes before his eyes, palpitations and anxieties, hourly afflicted him. "Do you suppose," he said, with impatience, "that I wish for life? I have grown heartily sick of it, and shall welcome the hour I depart from it. Why should I regret it? Can it afford me any pleasure? Have I not enjoyed it to a surfeit? Few men can live faster than I have done. I am, literally speaking, a young old man. Hardly arrived at manhood, I had attained the zenith of fame. Pleasure I have known under every form in which it can present itself to mortals. I had travelled, satisfied my curiosity, and lost every illusion. I have exhausted all the nectar in the cup of life: it is time to throw away the dregs. But the apprehension of two things now haunts my mind: I picture myself slowly expiring on a bed of torture, or terminating my days, like Swift, a grinning idiot! Would to heaven the day were come in which, rushing sword in hand upon a body of Turks,* and fighting like one weary of existence, I should meet immediate, painless death, the object of my wishes."

"It is with infinite regret," continues the writer, "I must state, that, although I seldom left Lord Byron's pillow during the latter part of his illness, I did not hear him make any, even the smallest, mention of religion. At one moment I heard him say, 'Shall I sue for mercy?' After a long pause, he added, 'Come, come, no weakness. Let's be a man to the last.'"

Thus terminated, in a gloomy, sullen fit of infidel misanthropy and despair, rank, wealth, genius; all of which had been sacrificed to scepticism, and its natural fruits, vice and misery. He had made pleasure his deity, and now see in what a miserable condition his God leaves him. What an antidote does his death furnish to the poison of his life! Is there any thing here to tempt us to infidelity and vicious pleasure?

Perhaps you propose mental cultivation and the acquisition of knowledge as the great end of life. We say nothing against learning, science, and the arts. We profess to admire them, and to have some taste for

* He died in Greece, whither he had gone to assist the Greeks against the Turks.

them. We have drunk at their springs, and often bitterly regret that our circumstances forbid us to partake more largely of their delicious waters. But then what will these do for us, in supplying the deeper wants of our moral nature, healing its diseases, or in satisfying its higher aspirations? Can they obtain for us the renovation of our corrupt hearts, the pardon of our numerous sins, the forfeited favour of God, assistance in our struggles after holiness, consolation in the dark and dreary hour of human woe, guidance amidst the perplexities of life, and protection from its dangers? Or, as may be the case, should we be cut off in life's sweet prime, will they stand by our dying bed, smooth its pillows, and comfort us in the prospect of the grave? Will they qualify us to go in and dwell with God in heaven, and partake of the glories of immortality? Shall we in looking back upon life so early brought to a close, and in looking on to eternity so near at hand, feel that in studying science and neglecting religion, we have answered the end of life.

But perhaps your ambition takes a lower aim, a narrower range, and you have set your highest mark in domestic happiness, and feel that in obtaining a comfortable home, and sharing it with the woman of your choice and of your love, you would reach the summit of your ambition, and neither look nor wish for any thing beyond. This, in subordination to religion is a wise moderation, a lowly and modest ambition: but, put in lieu of piety, it is a grovelling and earthly one. How soon, if acquired, may that little earthly paradise be broken up by the intrusion of poverty or death! Besides, what is so likely to secure this object as the one

we recommend? It is only over the lovely scene of a religious household that the beautiful strain of ancient poetry may still be poured, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side; as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters."

Tested then by itself and an examination of its own characteristics, and also by contrast with every thing that may be put in competition with it, Religion proves itself to be what it really is, and we ourselves have found it to be, the chief end, the chief good, and therefore the chief business of life.

To assist each other in the pursuit of this object we, who send forth this Address, are associated in brotherhood and in fellowship. The purpose of our association is not scientific, that may be sought, and should be sought, in other associations; neither is it political, on this subject we have our opinions, and as they may in some measure differ, we do not discuss that thorny topic; nor is it commercial, we gain our knowledge of everything connected with trade by solitary reading and attending to our business, whatever it may be, in the scene of our daily occupation; nor, we can truly aver, is it sectarian, for we are members of different communities of Christians, who, without sacrificing or compromising our conscientious convictions and usual practices, have agreed to unite for a common object, upon the basis of great principles avowed by us all, and are held to each other by the bond of brotherly kindness and charity. We had already learnt, from many proofs around us, the possibility of union without compromise, and now

have experienced, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." It is our conviction that no sentiments ought to keep professing Christians from uniting with each other in some way, which do not keep them from union with Christ.

We say, then, to you, as Moses did to his father-in-law, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you: Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." And we think that it would be happy for you, if you would reply in the language of Ruth to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

It is not our chief aim, however, to draw you within the circle "of our hallowed association," as we deem it, for this would do you no good, nor would it promote the end of our union, or be in accordance with its laws, unless you were first drawn to God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is this latter end which is our main object. Having found out the blessed secret that genuine religion is the young man's safest guide, as well as surest bliss, we long to impart the secret to you, and to lead you to the well-spring of pure felicity. As we have already said, once like you we were ignorant of this, but the eyes of our understanding are now opened, and in the fulness of our adoring wonder, gratitude, and love, we feel that we cannot more worthily magnify God, for his grace to us, or more acceptably serve him, than by an endeavour to make you the sharers of our bliss.

When the great Wizard of the North, (as Sir Walter Scott, on account of the enchantment of his pen was

called,) was in his last illness, he said to his son-in-law, "Lockhart, be a good man, be a religious man." "Read to me," said he, to the same near relative. "What book, sir?" With a look of surprise, almost of rebuke, the dying novelist and poet said, "There is only one book which will suit me now." What a sad proof, and what a melancholy instance of the instability and unsatisfying nature of all earthly greatness, do the closing scenes of this great man's life, and the posthumous history of his family afford! When in the zenith of his fame, kings might have envied him; and when in the decay of his fortune and his life, embarrassed in circumstances, and broken in spirits, his enemies, if he had any, might have pitied him. Go in imagination to the picturesque ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, and, as you hear, among the broken arches the rustling of the ivy, the moans of the breeze, and the plaintive notes of the robin which chant his requiem, listen to another sound which comes over that solemn spot, the awakened echoes of Solomon's impressive words, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity;" all but one thing, true Religion. There take the advice of that extraordinary man, "Be a religious man." And O could he speak to you from that world to which his lofty spirit has passed, with how much deeper an emphasis would he say, "Be a religious man." In that one short sentence is comprehended more true wisdom, more real dignity, more genuine philosophy, more pure happiness, more unfading honour, than can be learnt from the hundred volumes of his bewitching pen.

Dwell upon the advantages you, in common with ourselves, possess for pursuing, acquiring, and enjoying

this chief end of life. We are in the morning and therefore the freshness of existence. The dew of our youth lies upon us, which, as it sparkles in the morning sun, softens the soil of our mind, and makes our faculties at once more receptive and more active. We have all the susceptibilities and sensibilities of our nature, in their most impressible and excitable condition. Our heart, imagination, conscience, memory, are all vigorous yet tender. What an advantage for knowing, searching after truth, practising godliness, and enjoying the peace that passes understanding. Religion, as regards its evidences, appeals by a mighty logic to the intellect; but, as regards its nature, it fills the imagination with a Divine poetry, and the heart with a holy and well-moderated enthusiasm.

Nor is this all. Our age and circumstances free us from that urgency of care and pressure of anxiety, which are the lot of the man of business at all times, especially in these, which we see experienced by those in whose service we are engaged, and which, it is evident, are among the greatest obstacles and enemies to piety. True we have our daily tasks and labours to perform, and can find little leisure, amongst the hurry of business, for general or religious reflection; but we leave our cares in the shop, and the evening is our own; and the early-closing system is now relieving us, in part, of that extreme pressure and exhausting effect of labour under which we had been wont to suffer, and by which we were all but utterly unfitted for general mental improvement or religious exercises. And even then we had our Sabbaths to ourselves. But look at our employers. They are never free from care; it follows them from the shop to the parlour, and from the parlour to the

chamber; it often forbids their sleep, and too frequently renders profitless their Sabbaths, because it makes powerless this injunction,

> "Far from my thoughts, vain world, begone;
> Let my religious hours alone."

Is this the time, and are these the circumstances to which you would refer the consideration of the soul's momentous affairs? "Remember now, then, your Creator in the days of your youth." Yours is a halcyon season if ye did but know it. Religion will guard you from the snares to which youth are ever and every where exposed: it will comfort you in sorrow, cheer you in solitude, guide you in perplexity: we speak from experience, for it has done all this for us. And there is another thing it will do for you: it will save you from doing harm, and enable you to do good. None will be poisoned by your principles, nor seduced by your temptation, nor corrupted by your example. "My unkindness has murdered my wife, my principles have corrupted my friend, and my extravagance has beggared my boy," was the agonizing and remorseful confession of a dying infidel and libertine. What mischief you may do, what ruin you may inflict, if you are not religious, you cannot conceive and would shudder to know. But, on the other hand, true piety will necessarily make you philanthropists. You will imitate Him of whom it is so simply, but so sublimely said, "He went about doing good." Religion is patriotism; and he who seeks to spread it, as well as to practise it, is in a double sense a patriot. Now this will be your employment if you fear God. You will, in some way or other, seek to make bad men good, and good men better. We are all employed; some as Sunday-school teachers, others as

religious tract distributors, others on committees of various religious institutions; and we feel it at once our duty, honour, and bliss to be thus occupied. Come and join us in these works of mercy and labours of love. Every thing in this wonderful age calls to benevolent action. The voice of God and the times say, "Do something, do it." Catch the inspiration of the command, and determine to leave the world better than you found it.

We now bring this address to a close, by reminding you that there may be no time to lose for some of you in making up your mind on this momentous theme. Life is the most uncertain, and death the most certain, thing in man's history. "Youth is mortal as fourscore." Presume not on long life: we have all of us followed young companions to the grave; and soon the same last office of friendship may be performed for us. This year will doubtless be the last to some who shall peruse these pages. Many died the last year, not only by the sword of the destroying angel in the form of pestilence which has passed over our land, but by the ordinary shafts of death. There they lie in "the congregation of the dead;" they have given up the ghost, and where are they? What has been will be. Thousands more will this year follow other thousands that have preceded them to the grave. Let us not feel secure because the mysterious and awful epidemic which has so crowded our burial-places has been withdrawn. Cholera is not the only weapon which death employs in the work of destruction: half as many British youth are every year swept off by death as the whole number of persons of all ages who have been carried away by the pestilence. O, to those who are prepared, it is a sublime thing

to die; they shall begin the year on earth and end it in heaven! But how indescribably awful the reverse!

It is a consolatory and encouraging thought that it requires not threescore years and ten to secure the great object of life. We have sometimes seen a young man of good prospects in life, possessing good talents improved by education, and in every respect promising to his friends and society, cut off by death just at the commencement of his career, and were ready to exclaim, "Alas, what a disappointment! He has lived in vain, and by his early removal has lost the end of life. Cut down like a flower in spring before its leaves were fully unfolded, of what advantage either to himself or others was his brief sojourn in our world?" We may spare our lamentations, so far as the subject of them himself was concerned. That young man was a partaker of God's grace; he had remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, and had thus accomplished the chief end of existence, as truly as if he had lived to threescore years and ten. He had secured "the one thing needful." He had obtained the salvation of his soul. What greater or better portion could he have obtained had he lived to the age of Methuselah? In his case, it was only so much cut off from time to be added to eternity, and only a shorter sojourn on earth for a longer dwelling in heaven.

But now turn to another spectacle, we mean that of an individual who has lived out his fourscore years, and died at last without religion. He may have acquired wealth and left his family in affluence; he may have got for himself a name, and obtained a niche for his statue in the temple of fame; he may have gained respect for his talents while he lived, and for his memory when

dead; and he may have even left a rich legacy to posterity in works of public usefulness: but inasmuch as he neglected to glorify God by a life of religion, he lived in vain as regards another world; the sublime end of existence was lost; and in the first moment of his waking up in another world, he would exclaim, "I have lost my life, for I have lost my soul;" and have committed a mistake, which we repeat it will require an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore.

From that mistake may God in his great mercy preserve us, by bringing us with clear intelligence, deliberate resolution, inflexible purpose, and prayerful dependence, to adopt and ever to maintain the apostle's choice of an object of existence, and say, in reference to the salvation of our immortal soul, this one thing I do.

THE POSSESSION OF SPIRITUAL RELIGION

THE SUREST

PRESERVATIVE FROM THE SNARES OF INFIDELITY AND THE SEDUCTIONS OF FALSE PHILOSOPHY

A LECTURE

DELIVERED TO THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION AT EXETER HALL DECEMBER 26 1843.

GENTLEMEN,

I RISE with a deep, solemn, and somewhat oppressive sense of the responsibility I have incurred by undertaking to deliver this address; and my respect for you, and my ardent wishes for your welfare, lead me to desire that the task had devolved on one much better qualified to discharge it than myself. If, however, a due appreciation of the importance to the community of the class to which you belong, a ready admission of the claims you have upon public regard, and a heart palpitating with anxiety to promote your present and eternal happiness, bestow any fitness for the post I occupy this evening, I come not behind the most illustrious of my coadjutors in this labour of love, however inferior to them I am in other respects. May my efforts to do you good be as successful as my wishes are intense.

Often as I have stood on this platform, and not only looked round upon the immense convocations assembled on the most momentous occasions, but addressed them,

I have never seen a more interesting spectacle than that which now presents itself to my notice. It is imposing, delightful, and overwhelming. How much is comprehended in that short and simple phrase, "Our young men!" the hopes of families, of churches, of the nation, of futurity, all centre in these; and here is the great reality: here are our young men.

"When Catiline attempted to overthrow the liberties of Rome, he began by corrupting the young men of the city, and forming them for deeds of daring and crime. In this he acted with keen discernment of what constitutes the strength and safety of a community, the virtue and intelligence of its youth, especially of its young men. This class of persons has, with much propriety, been denominated the flower of a country. Whilst they are preserved uncorrupted, and come forward with enlightened minds and good morals to act their respective parts on the stage of life, the foundations of social order are secure, and 'no weapon' formed against the safety of the community can prosper."

Participating in these views, so well expressed by an American author, I most readily consented to unite with others to promote the welfare of the young men of this great city. London is the heart of the British empire, from which the life's blood is flowing off incessantly, through innumerable arteries, to the very extremities of our vast national body, and carrying with it the tide of health or disease. This is no less true of the young men of London. Into how many cities, towns, villages, and hamlets will the thousands now congregated in this hall be in a few years distributed, and what a moral influence for good or for evil will they exert upon our whole nation!

The subject on which I am to address you this evening is as follows: "The possession of spiritual religion is the best and surest preservative from the snares of infidelity and the seductions of false philosophy."

This subject is of my own selecting. It is, I am aware, somewhat more directly religious than most of the others to which you have listened from my honoured fellow-labourers. It will not, however, with Christian young men be the less welcome on that account, nor less useful perhaps to those who unhappily cannot, in the fullest sense of the term, be so designated. It is at any rate an appropriate sequel to the admirable lecture delivered last Tuesday evening by the Rev. Hugh Stowell. Besides this, my mind is much impressed with the importance of having a proportionate admixture in these lectures of directly moral and religious subjects with such as are only connected with religion, but do not enter vitally into its essential nature. Were I to attempt to depreciate the value of knowledge, or dissuade you from a laudable ambition to acquire it, I should deserve to be hissed by your indignant reprobation from this assembly, and should justly entitle myself to the scorn and contempt of society. As the minister of a system of truth, whose emblems are not the mole and the bat, but the noble bird of day, that soars to the sun with an eye that never blinks and a wing that never tires, I can not only witness the diffusion, but would aid the advance, of all useful knowledge, with a most entire persuasion that true religion has nothing to fear from true science, and true science nothing to fear from true religion. It is only a spurious religion that shrinks from the light of a true philosophy, and only a philosophy, falsely so called, that is not harmonious with revealed truth. I will yield to none in the pleasure with which I trace the elevation of the human mind from the dark and low level of ignorance and barbarism to the lofty and radiant heights of literature and science.

I would not extinguish a ray of genius that encircles her brow, nor pluck off an article of taste that decorates her attire. I value learning and science as ennobling our nature, literature as refining our taste, and the arts as multiplying our comforts. But still, gentlemen, there is something more precious in itself, and more valuable to its possessor, than even knowledge however varied or extensive, and that is virtue and piety. Man's moral nature places him further above the brute creation, gives him a higher rank in the universe, and advances him into a nearer resemblance with God, than his intellectual nature. The lower animals have gleams of intellect and shadows of reason, but they have not a spark of conscience, and are therefore incapable of morality and religion. And the intellectual being lower than the moral part of our nature is subordinate and ancillary to it, so that he who cultivates his mind, and stores it with all kinds of knowledge, but neglects to form his character to virtue and holiness, satisfies himself with taking too low a view of humanity, and excludes from the objects of his ambition the knowledge of the highest truth and the enjoyment of the chief good. Viewing man as a moral and an immortal creature, and considering that piety and virtue are the only preparations for eternal felicity, I regard our great Newton as engaged in a less sublime occupation when penetrating into the vast unknown of space, exploring with the torch of science the secrets of nature, and disclosing the laws of the material universe, than when carrying on the processes of religion within his own breast, and thus maturing for a glorious immortality. Gentlemen, it is easy to perceive that it is unhappily the tendency of the present age to ascribe, not

perhaps too much importance to knowledge, but too little importance to religion. Knowledge as such, and for its own sake, and apart from religion, is the god of men's idolatry. Genius is rated at a higher value than virtue, and even of those who in the pursuit of knowledge pay some general attention to religion, the greater number are content to stop and worship the God of Nature in the outer courts of the temple of divine truth, and comparatively few pass on to adore the God of Grace, as he reveals himself by the brighter manifestations of his glory upon the mercy-seat, although no interposing veil arrests their approach, and no flaming cherub repels their intrusion. I say to you, then, young men, improve your minds, cultivate your intellects, accumulate knowledge, endeavour to acquire sagacity, diligence, and expertness in your several vocations, but stop not here, nor indeed at any other point till you have secured that invaluable possession of which the Patriarch of Uz so eloquently writes, when he says, "But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. Whence then cometh wisdom and where is the place of understanding, seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living? Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. And unto man he saith, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding."

And permit me now to say that this wisdom is your

surest preservative from the snares of infidelity and the seductions of false philosophy. Never in any age of the world's history was infidelity more active or more artful than it is in the present day. The more artful it is, of course, the more dangerous it is. It is not always a repetition of the vulgar ribaldry of Paine, the profane wit of Voltaire, the half concealed sneers of Gibbon, or even the avowed and entire scepticism of Hume; it is something still more subtle and insidious; for it is often associated with compliments to the character of Christ, to the genius of his moral code, and to the heroic virtues of many of his followers and martyrs; while, at the same time, it resolves the whole into mere myth or fable, which if it be indeed so can have no claim upon the judgment, no hold upon the conscience, and no influence upon the conduct; and it is thus all the more dangerous, for assuming a form and wearing a costume less likely to shock men's prejudices, prepossessions, and convictions. It appeals, my friends, to your Pride of Intellect, and tells you that you have reason to guide you, and have no need of revelation. It points you to the achievements of science and the arts, and loftily asks the question, Whether, if man's reason can work such wonders as these, it cannot guide his conduct and be sufficient for all moral purposes? It addresses itself to your Love of Freedom, and invites you to throw off the yoke of authority and the trammels of prescription and walk abroad redeemed from the fetters of superstition by the irresistible power of free inquiry. It speaks to your Love of Pleasure, and incites you to burst through the restraints which rigid moralists and ascetic divines would impose upon the gratification of instincts and appetites implanted in

our nature by the hand of the Creator to be indulged. It points you, as it did Eve, by the finger of Satan its great teacher, to the blushing tempting forbidden fruit with the daring question, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" It is specious, plausible, persuasive.

And then like it, as the shadow is to the substance, is false philosophy, indeed it is almost difficult to distinguish them in the present age. Recollect, I call for no crusade against philosophy. If by this we mean the science of first principles, or, in other words, that which investigates the primary grounds, and determines the fundamental certainty, of human knowledge generally, there can be nothing in such a term to fright us from our propriety; or to excite any alarm for the security of religion. A sound philosophy must ever be in harmony with a sound theology. It is only against "a philosophy falsely so called" that I caution and defend you; and of this there is a superabundance in the present day: the press teems with it, and much of our literature is saturated with it. Less honest, and therefore more dangerous, than avowed and unconcealed infidelity, it does not rudely assail Christianity, and proclaim it false, but haughtily declares it obsolete. Taking advantage of the progressive developments of science, it insinuates that religion is subject to the same changes, and is susceptible of the same advance and improvement, as other matters of inquiry. That, however good and even true in some of its main facts it may have been at the time of its promulgation, it is no longer necessary, for that the world has outgrown the systems of its infancy. That in the manhood of the species, reason is a sufficient guide in all moral as well

as in all physical truth. It needs scarcely be said, gentlemen, that this is only another and a still more deceptive phase of infidelity. Christianity is a system intended and adapted for all time and for all states of society; and any attempt to confine its application to the earlier ages of the world, is not only to defeat its design, but, in fact, to deny its existence altogether as a revelation from heaven. But how flattering an idea is it to the pride and vanity of our intellect, to be told that we, in this generation, have arrived at the age of intellectual maturity, that we are the adults of human nature, that we are the full-blown flowers of the race, and can do without those helps which were needed for the protection of the infants and buds of humanity!

Here, then, is the danger of the thinking and reflective youth of this age; it is, in fact, the danger of the age. They are not so likely to be carried away by the delusions of Popery or of Puseyism, (which appeal more to the imaginative and the morbidly sensitive,) as by matters which throw their spell over the intellect, and fascinate the understanding by the potency of false logic and metaphysics. The English mind, in matters of philosophy, is being now operated upon to a wide extent by that of France and Germany; and that operation, I regret to say, is, so far as regards the religion of the Holy Scriptures, pernicious in the extreme. It is against these evils I am anxious to guard you. Conceive what is involved in either avowed or concealed infidelity. Look at it as it really is; tear from it the mask with which it would conceal its hideous visage; strip off from it the meretricious dress with which it would cover its misshapen form; and say if it be not a monster from which you should recoil

with abhorrence, as the enemy of all virtue and all happiness.

What a miserable man, if he give himself up fully to the influence of his principles, is an avowed unbeliever in revelation! He knows no race of beings, nor any individual being, better than himself, whom he knows to be not only imperfect, but corrupt; nor any world happier than that which he inhabits, which he is convinced by experience is a vale of tears. To him God is but a name, salvation a fable, heaven a dream, immortality a delusion. He knows not whence he came, nor whither he is going; from darkness he issued, and into darkness he is soon to vanish. He has no authoritative rule of virtue for his conduct, no relief in trouble, no hope in death. He is tossed upon an ocean of doubt and uncertainty; and, amidst the roaring of the tempest and the raging of the billows, sees no friendly beacon, no haven of safety: no, nothing but the black and frowning rocks of annihilation, against which his frail bark must soon dash and be lost for ever. An infidel then cannot be a happy man, at least cannot be made so by his principles: it would be an inversion of the order of things, and a monstrous incongruity, if he could. His heart may be petrified by stoicism till he is past feeling; or he may be merry and jovial, but it is often the feigned merriment of a timid boy whistling to keep his spirits up and chase away his fears as he passes through a churchyard, and whatever enjoyment he really has comes from other sources than his opinions, for they can yield him none, for his creed is made up of negations. To look for happiness from infidelity therefore is to expect sunbeams from shades, and the cheerful light of day from

midnight gloom. And as an infidel cannot, upon and by his own principles, be a happy man, so neither can he be a holy one, nor, in the fullest and best sense of the term, a virtuous one. He may not be absolutely vicious and profligate, many infidels are not; though it is no libel against the school of infidelity to affirm that many of its pupils have become proficients in sin. I say of the infidel's morality, as I have said of his enjoyment, that whatever degree of it he possesses, comes not from his principles, but from other and extraneous sources. He must step beyond his creed for both, for that cannot supply either. Infidelity supplies no basis, no materials, no cement, no plan, for erecting a system of morality. It furnishes neither laws, models, motives, nor obligations. It destroys responsibility; extinguishes conscience; reduces virtue to a matter of taste, and vice either to the inevitable result of circumstances, or to a calculation of the chances of escape from evil consequences. As infidelity, it teaches nothing but to contest all principles and to adopt none; and transvenoms the natural thirst after truth into the hydrophobia of a homeless and incurable scepticism.

"As mere animalism and atheism, it completes the ravage and ruin of man, which, in its preceding forms it has successfully begun. It now holds out the rank Circæan draught, and sends the deluded wretches who are allured to taste it, to bristle and wallow with the swine, to play tricks with the monkey, to rage and rend with the tigers, and then, when death has done its work, to putrefy into nothing, with the herd of kindred brutes."

Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism, the extreme of infidelity, is a soil barren of virtue and fertile of sin; hostile to every useful restraint and every virtuous affection; and that leaving nothing above us to excite awe,

nothing before us to awaken fear, and nothing around us to generate tenderness, it wages war with heaven and earth, its first object being to dethrone God, its next to destroy man. Gentlemen, does not a thrill of horror come over you at the bare idea of being in danger of giving up the Bible, and all its sources of happiness and holiness, for this system of dark and cruel negations? May such an exclamation as this be called forth from the very depths of your soul: God forbid that I should ever become an infidel! Amen to that prayer.

I hasten then to describe your best and surest preservative from this awful eclipse of your moral principles, and that is spiritual religion. You want a shield, here it is. By spiritual religion, I mean the religion of the mind and heart, as opposed to a mere attendance upon outward forms, or the mere profession of theoretic principles. Religion, the religion of the New Testament, is not a mere hereditary something received by tradition from our fathers, the performance of a round of ceremonies, or the adoption of certain articles of faith; it is repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, supreme love to God, and practical benevolence to man; all springing out of a principle of divine life implanted by the Holy Spirit in the soul. It is a new and holy vitality, the highest kind of life, the life of God in the soul of man, a divine spark, which, though now but as the smoking flax, shall, when all that hinders its ignition is removed, burst into a pure bright flame, trembling, yet rising in continual aspirations to its eternal source. I shall now point out in what way it will be a preservative from the snares of infidelity and the seductions of false philosophy.

1. By putting us in the best position, and giving us

the greatest advantages for examining the historical evidences of Christianity. It is the boast and glory of our holy religion, that it rests on a solid basis of evidence, and does not demand our belief without affording, not only sufficient grounds to warrant it, but to render unbelief unreasonable and criminal. This is assumed in the present lecture, the object of which is to show you that spiritual religion will place you in the most favourable position to judge correctly of the evidence which sustains our faith. I need not tell you that in our fallen condition the heart, instead of being always led by the judgment, is sometimes its leader; or, to change the metaphor, the state of the heart, like coloured glass, affects the rays of light which come to the eye, and changes them into its own hue. How momentous then is it that the heart should be holy, in order that the rays of truth should come to it in their own clear white light. Our Lord has adverted to this when he says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Disposition, in the case of moral truth, is the best means for coming to a right conclusion. The power of prejudice to mislead the judgment is proverbial, and may become so strong as to be invincible by any amount of evidence: for be it recollected that conviction does not follow according to the amount of evidence, but to the amount candidly considered and weighed.

> "Convince a man against his will,
> He's of the same opinion still."

Now the infidel does not wish to be convinced, and the light of evidence is to him but as the rays of the sun to a weak disordered eye, the more offensive accord-

ing as more powerful and abundant. It may be said perhaps that prepossessions destroy impartiality no less than prejudices. Granted: but in this case there is no such thing, and can be none, as absolute impartiality; if there be no bias for the truth, there must be a bias of some kind and some degree against it. There ought not to be impartiality: for Christianity comes to us, not as a matter of mere science, a thing only appealing to the judgment; it addresses itself also to the heart. It is not only truth, but moral truth, truth in the angel, yea godlike, form of goodness: to be indifferent to it is to be criminal, and therefore to be prepossessed in favour of its truth is a right and proper state of mind. This is the very state which spiritual religion imparts. It rids the heart of those prejudices which rise like thick fogs and dark clouds into the atmosphere of the judgment, obscuring the glorious orb of truth and shutting out the light of evidence from the mind. It is the eye of goodness only that can clearly see the light of moral truth. To him whose moral vision has been purified from the scales of sin and prejudice, at the fount of regenerating grace, the evidence of miracle and prophecy will appear little short of actual demonstrations of the truth of Christianity. The argument of our great writers on the evidences of Christianity will appear radiant as sunbeams, and sound in the ears of piety like responses from a divine oracle. The film has been removed from the disordered eye, and the mild and silvery light of truth comes unobstructed into the soul; and the ear is unstopped from prejudice to listen to its mellifluous voice, speaking by such writers as Paley, Butler, and Chalmers. Thus the religious man is not only prepared to see the beauty of Christian truth

when she lifts up the veil, but to estimate her claims to a heavenly origin and a divine authority.

2. Recollect that spiritual religion adds another proof to the external evidences of Christianity, different from them in kind and more conclusive still in the conviction it produces; I mean that derived from experience. Spiritual religion adds the evidence of consciousness to that of external testimony. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." He has undergone a moral renovation, which he is fully persuaded nothing short of a divine power could have effected. His views, emotions, tastes, and habits are all altered. An entire change has come over him. His moral self is renewed. He is the same identical man, but he is still a new creature. Now here is power, wondrous power. If Christianity were false, it would have been weak, for feebleness is essential to falsehood; but here is power. And here too, is beauty, even the beauty of holiness, and there is no loveliness in heaven or earth like it. Holiness is the seraph's charm, the very glory of Deity. God has nothing greater or better in his own infinite excellence than his holiness. And this holiness is wrought into the soul in the great change which implants personal religion in it. How, I again ask, can this be if Christianity be false, for falsehood is itself moral deformity? The real Christian, who knows his inner self, who traces the working of his own mind, and who is acquainted with his own character, realizes a workmanship which is not, cannot be human. He has known in himself the resurrection of a dead soul, the creation of a new moral being; and who can create or raise the dead but God? He is in himself therefore

a seal to the truth of the gospel. You may as well attempt to prove to him by argument that honey is not sweet, as to induce him to think the gospel is a falsehood: in each case he replies, "I know better; I have tasted it." Arguments may be employed against his faith which he may not have dialectic skill enough to rebut; sophisms may be advanced which he may not be able to expose; and fallacies may be uttered which he may not have sufficient expertness to detect; and if his faith stood merely on external and historic ground he would be in danger of falling: but his faith is rooted and grounded in consciousness, in experience, in the power of the inward witness. His spiritual religion stands by him even when his logic fails. He casts out the anchor of his heart, which with its chain cable still holds fast the strong ground of revelation, when other matters fail, and enables him to ride out the storm, and prevents him from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Recollect, gentlemen, I am not underrating the value of historic proof. Christianity is affluent and mighty in this; so much so, that the incredulity of infidelity is the excess of credulity, and its boasted philosophy the extreme of irrationality, which must be set down as at open war against all the laws of a sound logic. I am not speaking lightly of the wonderful productions of Butler, Paley, and Chalmers, that grand artillery on the heights of our Zion which has carried such discomfiture and defeat into the trenches and the armies of the besieging foes; but still I remind you that, in addition to all these, and to the majority above all these, there is the inward witness which every true believer carries in his

own bosom, and which to him is always nearer at hand, and will often be of more service than the ablest productions of the mightiest champions of our faith.

In the possession of this spiritual religion, then, you carry about with you always and everywhere the means of safety; it will be a shield and helmet and breastplate, if not a sword. You will escape unhurt from the laughter of the humorist, the shafts of the witty, and the keenest arguments of the dialectician; and, in the triumphant language of Watts, will exclaim:

> "Should all the forms that men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art;
> I'd call them vanity and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

3. Spiritual religion will protect you by the happiness which it affords. Man is created with a capacity for bliss, and an instinctive desire after it; and it would not accord with the wisdom and goodness of God to have created an appetite for the gratification of which he has made no provision. You and all other sentient, or at any rate all rational, creatures long to be happy. This is a rational self love; an instinct, not a virtue; a necessary propensity, not a moral excellence. What can a man have more, what can he desire less, than happiness? Yet how ignorant are most men of its nature, and of course of the means of obtaining it. The beautiful passage from the book of Job, already quoted, is as true in application to happiness as it is to wisdom, for in fact the wisdom there spoken of and true felicity are identical.

But what is happiness? Not mere amusement, merriment, gratification, pleasure, at least as these latter terms are employed in ordinary discourse; these

refer to the senses, the imagination, the intellectual tastes, the mere laughter-loving propensities of our nature: and know ye not, have ye not experienced, that under the brilliant covering, the gay exterior, of all these, there may be the never-dying worm gnawing at the heart and preying upon the peace? It is recorded, and by himself too, of that once licentious libertine, but afterwards saintly soldier, Colonel Gardiner, that when by general consent he was complimented as "the happy rake," he was inwardly, notwithstanding this deceptive appearance, so perfectly miserable, that he envied the dog which crouched at his feet. As another and a still more striking proof that pleasure and happiness are not convertible terms, think of that unhappy man, for such he undoubtedly was, notwithstanding his rank, his wealth, his genius, and his fame, whose name is the boast of modern poets, but at the same time the lament of religion and morality; that gifted nobleman, who prostituted his muse to the embraces of infidelity, and, as the result of such a union, has left us a siren offspring, which, by their fascinating strains, have lured multitudes to destruction, who, unhappy victims! have seemed to think it a compensation for the wreck of their immortal hopes to expire under the influence of genius and poetry. Even when listening to the melody of his wondrous verses, we hear perpetually the under-sounds of a groaning heart, as if God would show the necessity of religion to the happiness of the human bosom, in the wretchedness of the man who assailed it by the united powers of infidelity and poetry. Shade of Byron! oh that thou hadst known the truth of the inspired volume! thou too wouldest have been happy; and thy muse would have risen upon the wings of faith to a far

sublimer height than it ever reached, and have placed thee second to our great Milton.

Happiness is that calm, serene enjoyment, of which the heart is the seat and centre, which gives contentment to the desires, and is maintained under the smile of conscience, and the approbation of the judgment. And where but in true experimental religion can this be found? And I appeal with confidence to those of you who have tasted it, if it is not to be found there. Christianity lighted on our sorrow-stricken, weeping world, as a seraph from the land of bliss, bringing with her the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. Her eye beams with mercy on suffering humanity, her voice utters the music of consolation, her soft hand wipes away our tears, and the ways into which she leads are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace. She forbids us the fruit of no tree but what, however blushing and tempting it may appear, contains poison, and supplies us with no gratification but what is as wholesome as it is pleasant. She gives to the understanding the knowledge of the first truth, to the heart the enjoyment of the chief good. By the pardon of our sins through the blood of the everlasting covenant, she purifies and pacifies the conscience; by regeneration and sanctification she breaks the slavery and calms the turbulence of the passions, and brings us under the gentle sway of true holiness; by prayer meditation and the perusal of the Scriptures she helps us to maintain communion with the Father of our spirits; and by faith and hope she instructs us to anticipate and prepare for a glorious immortality. She is our guardian in the hour of temptation, our guide amidst the intricacies

of life, our companion in solitude, and our nurse in sickness. She will tread with us that dark and gloomy vale where no other friend can be near, and will then waft us on her more than angel's wings to the throne of the eternal, the fountain of life.

Gentlemen, are these the words of truth and soberness, or mere assertion and declamation? Will not your own happy experience verify what I have said? Here then, here I exultingly say, here is your defence, your best defence against the snares of infidelity. Will you relinquish all this? And for what? When infidelity solicits you to give up your religion, ask the tempter, What he has to give you in return? Your prudence, as well as your principle, should inquire, What he has to offer you in the way of compensation for the peace that passes understanding, the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory? What secrets of bliss has he acquired, and what elements has he discovered, more substantial and more satisfying than quietness of conscience, purity of heart, holiness of life, communion with God, the hope of immortality, and the foretaste of heaven? "Miserable man! who is proud of being the offspring of chance, is in love with universal disorder, whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to his designs, and who is at ease, only because he supposes himself an inhabitant of a forsaken and fatherless world!"

Will you quit the region of pure, solid, sublime delight, to which religion has led you, to wander in the gloom and desolate waste of a cold and heartless philosophy? Will you push out of this quiet haven, and from these still waters, to be tossed upon the unquiet ocean of scepticism, and wrecked at last upon

the shores of unbelief? Will you turn from this garden of the Lord, this paradise of God, where the sun shines upon the flowers and the fruits which his rays have ripened, and which he still continues to gild, to wander in the dark night of unbelief, amidst the bogs of endless doubt, and in chase of the wild fires of a false and doubtful philosophy? No, no; every conviction of your judgment, every yearning of your heart, every dictate of your conscience, every recollection of the past, and every anticipation of the future say "No." It would be like exchanging the tree of life for the vine of Sodom, whose grapes are gall and its clusters bitter; and turning from the river of life, clear as crystal, that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, to lap the dark and filthy puddle that oozes from the slime-pits of human depravity, and stagnates in the gutters of sensuality and vice. These two simple questions are, and will be, I believe, found a sufficient protection to you from the dangers which surround you; "What shall I lose by giving up Christianity? and what shall I gain by embracing infidelity?" Ah, what, what indeed?

4. Spiritual religion produces deep humility, and thus prevents that pride of intellect which gives so strong a bias, and produces so powerful a propensity, to infidelity and false philosophy. It, in all probability, was pride which occasioned the fall and expulsion from heaven of the sinning angels; it was pride of intellect which laid our race in ruins; it was pride which formed the character of the first murderer; from pride of intellect sprung originally the whole system of idolatry; and infidelity and false philosophy can boast no higher or better parent. It is the boast of infidels, that their

reason is sufficient for all the purposes of morality and religion, and they need not the aids of a revelation from God. Presumptuous confidence! But, alas! how seductive and how prevalent! What is it, but man deifying himself, and falling down to worship at the shrine of his own reason? Now the very genius of Christianity is directly opposed to all this. Its first lesson is humility, its second, humility, its third, humility. Distinguishing between self-degradation and self-exaltation, it leads us to consider that the powers of the human understanding are not only given, but sustained, in all their exercises by God: and therefore cherishes a spirit of dependence upon him; and while it leaves ample room for the exercise of reason in the way of discovery and invention in the fields of science and the arts, admonishes its possessors that it is at once too feeble and too corrupt to be a guide in place of religion. It reminds us that reason, once a sun, is now a meteor, partaking of the corruption of our nature, and needing a conductor at every step of our course; and calls upon us, in lowliness, gratitude, and confidence, to give ourselves up to a safer leadership.

And, besides this, spiritual religion makes a man intimately acquainted with himself; it leads him into the interior of his own soul, and there discloses to him such weaknesses as make him distrust himself; and furnishes the recollection of so many humbling failures, and so many painful chastisements of his own undue reliance upon himself, that he is prepared to follow the inspired injunction, not to lean to his own understanding, and most freely and fully to admit its declaration, that "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." And what is the practical expression and demonstration

of his humility? A constant habit of earnest prayer. Humility is the emotion of which prayer is the expression. Humility is the devotion of the heart, prayer that of the lip. Humility is the feeling of dependence, prayer is its language. Prayer is more constantly and necessarily connected with spiritual religion than speech is with natural life; there may be natural mutes, there can be no spiritual ones. The ear of the renewed soul is never closed, nor its tongue ever silent. Prayer is not only our duty but it is our honour and our privilege; for it is the converse of man with God, the intercourse of the finite spirit with the Infinite, the coming of the child of grace and heir of glory into the presence of his heavenly Father. Prayer is placing ourselves under the outstretched arm of Omnipotence, entering the secret place of the Almighty; it is in fact putting on the power of God as a shield, and taking hold of his might. Nowhere has infidelity with all its plausibilities less weight, nowhere has Christianity with all its difficulties and incomprehensibilities more power, than when both are contemplated together by an act of devotion in the light of God's countenance. Give yourselves, my respected friends, to prayer; be not ashamed of the exercise. Ashamed! Were an archangel to become incarnate, he would account it not only his bounden duty, but his highest honour, to pray. Conceal not, attempt not to conceal, the fact that you pray. It may be desirable, and is, in order to prevent distraction, to be quite alone; but if this cannot be, neglect not to bend your knee before your companions. You know not the influence such an act may have upon others. If the present lecturer has a right to consider himself a real Christian, if he has been of any service to his fellow-

creatures, and has attained to any usefulness in the church of Christ, he owes it in the way of means and instrumentality to the sight of a companion, who slept in the same room with him, bending his knees in prayer on retiring to rest. That scene, so unostentatious and yet so unconcealed, roused my slumbering conscience, sent an arrow to my heart; for though I had been religiously educated, I had restrained prayer, and cast off the fear of God; my conversion to God followed, and soon afterwards my entrance upon college studies for the work of the ministry. Nearly half a century has rolled away since then, with all its multitudinous events; but that little chamber, that humble couch, that praying youth, are still present to my imagination, and will never be forgotten even amidst the splendour of heaven and through the ages of eternity.

5. I may remark, in the next place, that real religion will preserve you from that line of conduct which creates a predisposition to infidelity, and which may be said to render it desirable. I would be far from affirming that infidelity is in every case seized as an opiate to lull the pain of a conscience, wounded and tormented by a recollection of guilt, or adopted as a licence for a career of iniquity; but I know that this has often happened, and how natural is it that it should be so! Infidelity is the enemy of virtue and the friend of vice, to the former it yields no assistance, and upon the latter it imposes no restraint. Without revelation it has no laws for morals; without God, no authority; without a future state of rewards and punishments, no motives, or none of sufficient power to resist the temptations by which it is assailed. Numerous instances have occurred of young men who, though not religious, were for a while generally

correct in their conduct: but who for want of religion to be the guide and guard of their youth, fell into temptation, and then, under the reproaches of an awakened conscience, called in the aid of infidelity or a false philosophy to stifle remorse, and to acquire confidence to go forward in the career of iniquity; just like the wretch who, after some great crime, quaffs brandy to produce oblivion of the past and courage for the future. Thus infidelity was a matter of convenience to get rid of all that appertained to conscience, responsibility, and eternity; it was called in to draw a cloud over the handwriting which came forth upon the wall against them; and to act as a charm to lay the ghosts of their sins, and dismiss the spectral forms of retributive justice, which visited them at the midnight hour, and made darkness and solitude intolerable. Religion will preserve you from all this: you will have no vice which shall give you an interest in infidelity and make you wish the Bible were not true; but on the contrary, as I have already considered, in the calm and holy pleasure which it imparts, and in the boundless prospects of immortal glory which it opens before you, it will, in addition to the evidence by which it convinces the judgment, entwine itself around your heart by all these toils of enjoyment, which, though soft as silk, will be strong as adamant.

6. Once more; religion will make you patient under the difficulties with which Divine truth, like every other system, is attended, and willing to receive it on the ground of its own evidence notwithstanding many things you cannot now explain; because of the assured prospect it presents of a state where all these difficulties will be cleared up. It is to be expected that on all questions to

be settled by moral evidence there will be difficulties, which will for a while perplex the inquiries of the acutest, and elude the grasp of the profoundest intellects; and it is no less to be expected, that these difficulties will increase in proportion as the subject is remote from the ordinary sphere of investigation, and out of the beaten track of human thought. What then might not be expected to be the deep mysteries, the awful incomprehensibilities, and the perplexities to man's limited intellect, on such subjects as a revelation concerning the nature, the attributes, the plans, and the will of the eternal God: the mode of communicating his mind to us; a plan of human salvation in accordance with the principles of a Divine moral government, man's responsibility, and a future and eternal state of rewards and punishments? Difficulties on such a subject! They are its natural and necessary attendants; they are the cloud-shadows of those momentous truths, which are thrown by the light of heaven shining upon them. Startled at difficulties! He is the most irrational of men, notwithstanding his boasts of free untrammelled intellect, who imagines a revelation could be given from God, which should contain nothing perplexing to human reason. When Divine truth, an awful form, comes forth from the pavilion of thick darkness, in which it has dwelt from eternity with its omniscient author, can it be expected there will be none of its stately steps which we cannot follow, none of its doings we cannot comprehend, none of its words which may seem to us mysterious, and no part of its very costume for which we cannot assign a reason, and that too when her own majestic voice has given us the warning, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways?"

Now, my young friends, look at the Christian: there he stands, with his faith rooted and grounded in the evidences of revealed religion, like a cedar on Lebanon, or like a castle upon a rock. Hear his soliloquy: "I know whom, and what, and why I believe; and my faith rests not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. To say that I see nothing which I cannot explain or comprehend would be untrue. When I consider the subjects revealed, and the limits of the understanding, this neither surprises nor distresses me; especially as I am assured that what I know not now I shall know hereafter: now I 'see through a glass darkly,' but 'when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away,' and I shall know even as I am known."

This is no vain boast: you walk now by faith, amidst the deep shadows of the mighty pass through which you are journeying to the inheritance of the saints in light: follow the awful form of truth, the path may be narrow, the mountains on either side may be high, the difficulties that oppose your progress may be great, treacherous voices may sometimes be heard suggesting that you have mistaken the road, and that the way of truth could not be thus narrow and hard; but follow on; there before you is the truth, radiant with the splendour of the evidence that falls upon its majestic form from heaven. Follow on, my young friends; the water of life runs gurgling at your side, "the plants of paradise, and the trees of righteousness grow upon the rocks that inclose you," the pass will soon be cleared, the walk of faith through its half-illuminated depths will be ended, and you shall emerge into the sunny and boundless plains of the paradise of God. By the glory and the power of the

orb that gilds those regions, every mist of prejudice, every cloud of ignorance, will be dissipated; every shadow will vanish, and the whole region of truth will spread out before your ravished eyes in boundless expanse and interminable perspective.

Permit me now to give an illustration, and indeed a proof, of the subject of this lecture from the last work of Merle D'Aubigné, the learned and eloquent author of the "History of the Reformation." The following is the substance of the account he publishes to the world of his final establishment in the truth of revelation: [see vol. ix, pp. 279, 280.]

This is one of the most interesting, instructive, and momentous narratives which it has ever been my lot to peruse, as teaching, that the defence of the Christian from the attacks of infidelity, false philosophy, heresy, and the painful doubts and difficulties suggested by man's reason, is to be sought rather in the grace of the heart than in the strength of the intellect, and that prayer and deep humility will often be more powerful to establish us in the truth than logic. He who is strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, and also is rooted and grounded in love, though less skilful in argument, is in a far better condition to resist the subtilties of false doctrine than he who is stronger in his logic. The hidden life within him is vigorous, and rich in the enjoyment of divine love, he is strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and though the strength of the human intellect, the chain of sound reasoning, and the conclusions of a just logic, when employed in elaborate defences of the truth, are of inestimable worth; yet, after all, it is to the blessing of God on the internal vigour of his own piety that the tempted believer is in-

debted for his stability, more than to those outworks, which are cast up from time to time by the ablest defenders of Christianity.

Gentlemen, I look upon this beautiful and simple testimony of D'Aubigné to the power of spiritual religion to preserve us from the seductions of a false philosophy, to be almost of as much practical value as his celebrated work on the Reformation.

In bringing this lecture, already too long, to a conclusion, I would remark, that I know, my respected friends, by experience, as well as by observation, the perils of your situation. I passed through them, and, thanks to divine grace, came unscathed from the midst of them. My youthful days were passed and my character was formed in a town where an infidel society existed. I heard the belchings of its foul and loathsome blasphemies, and the more wily utterance of its subtle, and therefore more dangerous sophistries, which, like the poisonous words of the serpent in the ear of Eve, whispered to me when alone; but I had by that time put on the shield of faith, and was safe. Not so a young companion; he, though moral, was not pious. He was taken in the snare, and became not only a disciple in the school of Paine, but a zealot. Unable to procure a copy of the "Age of Reason" for himself, he sat up whole nights to write a copy from one he had borrowed of a friend. Soon after this an attack of disease brought him to the borders of the grave. Standing, as he thought, amidst the shadows of death, and with the still darker shadows of eternity spreading out before him, with nothing visible to his perturbed imagination but the judgment throne of that God whom he had impiously defied, and the fiends of night stretching their

foul wings and flying to meet him, he saw and felt the danger of his situation; a secret horror crept through his blood; conscience, the scorpion of guilt, struck its sting into his bosom; and forebodings equally dark and intolerable, the dreadful presentiments of judgment to come, harrowed up his soul. Whither, in this extremity, did he, or could he turn for succour? To his infidelity and his infidel companions? Oh, no: they were the objects of his abhorrence and his dread. A pious friend, long forsaken, and perhaps much ridiculed, was sent for, who found him haunted with the spectres of guilt, oppressed with the terrors of eternity, and convulsed with the agonies of remorse. He renounced his infidelity with detestation and contrition, and, as a proof of the sincerity of his conviction and repentance, ordered his manuscript copy of Paine's "Age of Reason" to be brought out and burnt before his face. Perhaps my, friends, this will remind you of another infidel, far more illustrious than my poor friend, I mean the titled, the witty, the poetic, but infidel and licentious, Lord Rochester, who at length found his infidelity a miserable companion in the hour of sickness and of death, and then betook himself for consolation to that system of revealed truth which he had spent his short and profligate life in holding up to ridicule and contempt, and that he might mark his abhorrence of his infidel opinions, ordered his writings to be brought out and burnt before his eyes. An account of his extraordinary conversion was drawn up and published by Bishop Burnet, which, said Dr S. Johnson, "the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety." These are not rare cases. Myriads have lived infidels who could not die such: the seduc-

tive philosophy which could do very well amidst the gaieties of health has been found altogether wanting amidst the dreariness of a sick chamber, and the gathering shades of the dark valley. It is perhaps no weak argument in favour of Christianity, and against infidelity, that while myriads have renounced their infidel opinions and embraced Christianity upon their dying beds, we have never heard of an instance in which any one has renounced Christianity and turned infidel in prospect of eternity.

Much as I have trespassed on your time, and perhaps your patience, I cannot dismiss you till I have addressed a few counsels to one or two different classes of characters: and, first of all, I speak to those who, happily for themselves and for all connected with them, know by experience the truth of the subject of this lecture. Accept, ye pious young men, my sincere, my hearty congratulations on your holy choice, your blessed condition of a religious life. Be thankful, be humble, be consistent, be watchful. Be not ashamed before the mockers, nor afraid before the reasoners. Let them see in you how beautiful, and feel how awful, goodness is. Maintain imperturbable patience under ridicule, and exhibit a quiet firmness which would remain immoveable though the world laughed in chorus. There is no logic so convincing, no rhetoric so persuasive, as the power of uniform and conspicuous excellence. Give to the hard substance of moral worth the brightest polish of an amiable disposition, and all the amenities of life. To the arguments and sneers of the sceptical and profane, oppose the answer of a good conscience. Cultivate your intellect, and let them see that religion is no enemy to knowledge. Excel in your secular calling,

and make it manifest that it is the friend of man's temporal interests. Be courteous, generous, and benevolent, and let them see that it not only frequents the haunts of the Muses, but keeps company with the Graces. Be cheerful, and show them that it contains the elements of bliss. Be active and useful, and convince them, that while it worships God, it is the best benefactor of the human race.

It is possible that, in this vast assembly, there may be some who, unhappily, have not yet become truly and spiritually religious. To you, I say, Oh, satisfy not yourselves with mere worldly morality, which, though good as far as it goes, goes not far enough, and may be swept away before the assaults of infidelity and false philosophy, like a cobweb before the force of the hurricane. Rest not till you have obtained true religion, the religion of the heart. Determine to-night to yield yourselves to God. I can fancy the spirits of two worlds are hovering over this assembly, waiting with far different feelings the results of this appeal: one, with intense malignity, hoping for your continuance in irreligion; the other, with as intense benevolence, waiting to rejoice over your conversion. Will you give joy to heaven or to hell? But there are other beings waiting and watching for the results of this evening's address. There is the infidel fixing his basilisk eye upon you, and there, trembling for your safety, and anxious to save you from the spell, is the mother that bore you. She is aware you will be here to-night, and has entered her closet to invoke the blessing of the Divine Spirit upon this address. You know the spot where she is at this moment wrestling with God. You can picture to yourself the Bible on her table, and the very chair before which, in

prostrate supplication, she is agonizing in prayer for you. Your imagination sees her, hears her. Her eye is suffused with tears, her lips quiver, her voice falters, and, with thoughts and emotions too big for utterance, she can only cry, "My son, my son." Oh, thou that hearest the prayer of the humble, thou in whose ears the song of the seraphim is not sweeter nor more welcome music than a mother's prayers for her son, say to that agonizing suppliant as thou didst when tabernacling on earth to another mother interceding for her child, "Oh woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

It may perhaps be presumed, that though this is a Christian Young Men's Association, there are some infidels who have come here to-night, attracted by the subject of the lecture. I sincerely hope there are, to whom for one moment, I would address myself. Before you quite and for ever abandon that wonderful book, the Bible, (wonderful, if true, and in some respects, still more wonderful if false), before you turn for ever from the fair and beautiful fields of religion, both earthly and celestial, on which the sun of revelation is pouring his noontide flood of light and glory, to grope your way in the gloomy regions of infidelity; where, above, around, beneath, before, all is doubt, uncertainty, and despair; where not a ray of light is seen, nor a whisper of consolation is heard, and where you have nothing but the dark lantern of your own reason to guide your trembling, faltering, hesitating, steps; take the advice of one who wishes now to merge the lecturer in the friend; of one who feels that but for religion he knows not in what paths of error he should have been wandering, or to what depths of sin and misery

he would have sunk; and who to religion owes all that he possesses of reputation, happiness, or usefulness in this world; of one who, having found in religion the secret of happiness for himself, is anxious to disclose that secret to others; take the advice of such an one, and follow up the question, which, like a solitary straggling ray of light from heaven, I know sometimes falls upon your benighted faith, exciting not only inquisitiveness but uneasiness, "What, if after all, Christianity should be true?" Ah, what! Ponder that question, and, in the spirit of seriousness and impartiality, give the subject one more examination.

Gentlemen, I have finished my lecture, but not my solicitude for your welfare. Whatever interest in your improvement I brought with me to this hall, and it was not a little, has been increased by what I have witnessed. In looking back upon the labours of four-and-forty years, I recollect no effort, and in looking forward to the unknown future, I can anticipate none more important, than the work of this evening. The impression will never be effaced from my memory in this world, nor in all probability in the world to come. May the recitals of it be among the felicities of heaven and eternity for us all!

When I selected the subject of my lecture, it was not my expectation that its instructions would drop on female ears, or perhaps I might have made another choice. To the sex which we all honour and love, and without whom, it seems, no meeting is complete, no, not even an association of young men, a discourse on the best preservative from the danger of infidelity is not very needful or very appropriate, inasmuch as that is a peril to which they are in general little exposed, and in-

to which they rarely fall. True it is, the first sceptic in our world was a woman, and that woman the mother of us all; but since the fatal hour, when the doubts infused so mysteriously by the father of lies into her hitherto holy and confiding mind brought sin and death, and all our woes, woman has been rarely found on the side of positive and avowed unbelief. A female infidel is a spectacle as rare as it is unseemly. Woman expressly needs religion amidst her sorrows, her cares, her duties, and her responsibilities; and how earnestly does she seek its solace and its support! And may the women of England, whether wives, mothers, or daughters, be found in modern times, as they were in the dawn of Christianity, nearest the cross and the Saviour; and then whatever be the philosophy of our schools, or the infidelity of our literature, our Divine faith will still be safe in the asylum of the female heart, and will still triumph by the power of female influence.

THE FOUNDATION CONSTRUCTION AND ETERNITY OF CHARACTER.

A LECTURE

Delivered to the Young Men's Christian Association in the Town Hall Birmingham January 9 1852.

My Lord Calthorpe,

I deem myself both happy and honoured by your Lordship's presiding on this occasion: and I am quite sure the feelings of these young men, to whose assembly and object you have given the patronage of your presence, will be in perfect harmony with my own. Your conduct on this, as well as in other matters, is a demonstration that you consider the coronet never shines with a brighter lustre, than when its influence is devoted to the cause of religion; and you may be assured, my Lord, that the honours of hereditary rank are never regarded by the Commons of this great and happy country, with less envy, or with more approbation, than when they are thus gracefully and usefully employed to foster, especially among the important class of the community before you, the interests of knowledge, piety, and virtue. This, my Lord, is the object of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Permit me, my young brethren, to offer you my congratulations, not only on the formation, but on the continuance, of your truly valuable and deeply interesting Association. Another year has opened upon you with auspices little, if any thing, less propitious than those of any former period of your history. May its progress be as happy as its commencement! I wish it had fallen to other and abler lips than mine, to be the first to address you in this more public meeting: not that you could have found any one more anxious to serve you, or more pleased to do you good: but the gentlemen who are to succeed me would have been better placed as my leaders than as my followers.

The subject I have selected for the address of this evening is entirely of a practical nature: for you have wisely determined, as a Christian Young Men's Association, to consider moral and religious topics as one part of your object, provided they be of such a nature as to exclude controversy; and thus while pursuing truth, to do so in the spirit of Christian charity. And you need not be informed that important as are arts, science, and literature, religion and morals are infinitely more so; and that not only in regard to the happiness of another world, but of the life that now is. My subject this evening then, is the Foundation, the Construction, and Eternity of Character.

It is generally told of Francis the First of France, that after his disastrous defeat in the battle of Pavia by the Emperor Charles the Fifth of Germany, he announced the catastrophe to his mother in the following terse and magnanimous manner: "Every thing is lost, but my honour." The saying was worthy of a greater and better man. Similar to this has been the reflection and

expression of others, amidst the calamities of human life: of men, who, sitting down amidst the ruins of their fortunes, their prospects, and their hopes, have wiped away their tears, and nobly rising in the consciousness of integrity above their misfortunes, have said, "I have lost every thing but my character:" and with this consciousness, such men are less, far less, to be pitied, than those who have risen to wealth upon the ruins of their reputation. No man can be said to be in abject penury who is rich in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report; while, on the other hand, neither wealth, nor learning, nor science, can dignify a man without character. This is the best capital with which to begin life, which affords the most reasonable hope of success in passing through it, and which will yield the sweetest reflections at the close of it.

If it were granted you, at your own expense and under your own directions, to lay the foundations and to raise the walls of some magnificent structure, which should attract the admiration of the world, defy the assaults of time, and hand down your name to future ages, what an object of ambition would be thus placed within your reach! But how much nobler in itself, how much more valuable to you, and how much more enduring, is that which is actually proposed to you by the will of God, and which is to be set before you this evening, in the lecture to which you are now called to listen!

By character I mean the prevailing and habitual qualities or dispositions of the mind, which express themselves in appropriate conduct, and distinguish their possessor from other men. The word character is therefore expressive of a genus, of which there are many

species: such as the literary, scientific, heroic, and very many other varieties. In common parlance, however, the word is usually employed to designate moral qualities, for this is the meaning of the expression, "He has lost his character." In this sense I consider it in the present lecture, as indicative of moral and religious habits. If my description be correct, that it consists of prevailing and habitual qualities or dispositions, then of course, a merely occasional act, however splendid an instance of good conduct it may be, even though it should be repeated at long intervals, does not constitute character. A miser, for instance, may under some very peculiar circumstances, be induced to perform an act of even munificent liberality, but it is not his character to be liberal. Men sometimes do acts so unlike their prevailing disposition, that we are astonished at them as phenomena which exceedingly perplex us when we make inquiry into their cause. Even good men under the power of temptation occasionally do things very unlike themselves, and contrary to their character, but we find however that it survives the shock of these aberrations. General uniformity, consistency, and perseverance in good conduct then, are essential to character. I have known cases in which some single acts of a bad man have, to all outward appearance, excelled in magnitude and splendour any of the single acts of a good one; but the former was only a diseased and spasmodic virtue, which exhausted at once all the strength of the actor; while the latter was the continued and natural action of sound health: or to change the metaphor, the one was the rare but imposing splendour of the comet or the meteor, which appears but for a little while and then vanishes away;

while the other is the steady, continuous and directive, though it may be less imposing light, of the polar-star. A fitful virtue is of little value, and yet it is all that some men have who may not be totally abandoned to bad habits. Their minds seem to be ever in an intermittent fever, in which their cold and hot fits are in constant alternation.

Having then endeavoured to show what I mean by character, and what kind of character I intend in this lecture, I proceed,

I. To speak of its Foundation. This word is suggestive. The foundation of a building is laid in the earth. How much labour is bestowed in digging and throwing out the soil, and getting a trench ready to receive the materials which are to compose the fabric! How much material is lodged out of sight that is totally forgotten by the ignorant observers of the structure! Who, for instance, in passing St. Paul's Cathedral, and admiring its lofty dome and gilded cross, dreams of the masses of stone on which the whole rests, and without which the building must soon have been a heap of ruins? Yet there is the foundation, vast and deep, though buried, hidden and nearly forgotten. So must it be with character. The foundation must be laid in the mind, and heart, and conscience, and memory. There must be a digging into the soul, a throwing out of much that is in the way of what must be introduced, a making room for much material to be laid there, and a careful and laborious deposit of a suitable substratum. Something strong, broad, firm, must be buried and hidden in the soul. A lofty superstructure of character which shall abide and be permanent, can no more be raised, without this, than a towering building can stand

when erected upon the surface of the ground, without any foundation beneath it. The soul, not in its intellectual aspect and capacity merely, but in its moral and immortal one; the soul with its affections, passions, and propensities; the soul as the seat of will and conscience; the soul as the ground in which the basis of character is laid; must be the subject of serious consideration. Many men carry about their minds with less solicitude than they do their watches: knowing and caring almost as little of the faculties and powers of the one as they do of the mechanism of the other. This must not be with those who would form a good character. Of what materials then must the foundation of character be formed? What are the mighty and granite stones which must be deposited, for a character that is to stand for eternity? Science? Literature? The arts? No. These may do for the intellectual, but not for the moral character. These must be principles, moral principles. Moral character cannot rest on astronomy, geology, chemistry, electricity, magnetism. These things are admirable, useful, noble, sublime: but they can no more do for the basis of character, than jewellery or diamonds would do for the foundation of a pyramid or a temple. By principles I mean not opinions only, but convictions: not speculative theories on morals, but practical conclusions: sentiments not floating in the imagination, but rooted in the heart. I will enumerate a few of these; the eternal, necessary, and immutable, and not merely conventional, distinction between good and evil, right and wrong; the invariable tendency of what is good to happiness, and of what is evil to misery; the unerring rule of good and evil in the Bible, not making right and wrong, but revealing and recognizing them: the

corruption and weakness of human nature morally viewed; the supremacy of love to God and love to man, over all other motives of human conduct; the necessity of a renovation of the human heart, and the provision made in the scheme of man's redemption by Christ, through the agency of the Divine Spirit, for this purpose. These, and such as these, are the mighty stones which, dug from the quarry of the Bible, and laid in the human heart by the power of a living faith, constitute the foundation of that character which is to exhibit its beautiful proportions on earth, to rise to heaven, and to endure through eternity. These are the principles which must be laid in the depths of the human soul, by an intelligent apprehension of their nature, a deep conviction of their truth, and an impressive sense of their importance. To attempt to form a character without established principles, is like erecting a building without a foundation.

II. But character, like building, is not all foundation, there is superstructure also; and I now go on to consider its construction: and I remark, that in the present case, if principles are the basis, virtues are the edifice; in other words, moral truth developed in moral action. Just glance at the virtues which constitute the elements of every well-formed character. The first of these is Piety towards God, or the belief of the first truth, the enjoyment of the chief good, the acknowledgment of our highest relations, and submission to the supreme authority. This is the highest reach of virtue, the loftiest aspiration of humanity, the very sublime of created excellence. Then comes Prudence or the subjection of all our words and actions to the laws of wisdom, and a just regard to the consequences which actions

bring after them, remote as well as proximate, either as they affect our own comfort, or the comfort of others. Inflexible Integrity is necessary, such as no storm of adversity can bend or break, and no sunshine of prosperity can relax; which can pursue what is right, both towards God and man, and because it is right, to bonds, imprisonment, and death. Rigid Self-control is indispensable; a power which, under the direction of wisdom, can restrain the strongest innate impulses, and save from being hurried on from within to folly or vice; can hold in check the most violent temptations, whether they appeal to cupidity, ambition, or sensuality; which will assert the freedom of the soul against the attempts of the appetites and the passions, to bring it into bondage; which can endure the most heroic self-denial, and become a martyr to principle, rather than do an action which, whatever it may gain of pleasure or of wealth, sinks the actor in his own esteem.

"Reader, attend, whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flight beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole
In low pursuit,
Know, prudent, cautious self-control,
Is wisdom's root."

"It is this which saves a man from being a slave, and makes him master of himself. What noble powers and lofty geniuses have been wrecked and ruined for want of this virtue. Need I refer to a great poet, the failure of whose life was his failure in this endowment. With the largest mental endowments; the strongest susceptibilities; a capacity for the loftiest sentiments; he fell under the dominion of the animal appetites and passions, and perished in the meridian of life. His noble powers were too often prostituted, ere they became extinguished at what should be the highest point of culmination. What a fall, for such a soul to sink under the dominion of sense; to abnegate its high dignity, and yield itself to the same kind of forces which move the mere animal." McCombie's "Foundations of Individual Character."

Benevolence, or a practical regard to the happiness of others, is a prime and glorious element of character. This is the temper of angels, the law of heaven, the brightest, the truest, the only resemblance of God. Selfishness is beast-like, demon-like, but benevolence is God-like. To omit this, would be to leave out the richest distinction of which humanity is susceptible. To allude to the last element of moral character, I might mention a delicate sense of the generous, the noble, the honourable. When I speak of honour, I do not mean that morbid sense of offence which spreads over the whole soul as one vast, tender, and diseased membrane, that is susceptible of insult and injury to every touch, though gentle as the brush of an insect's wing; which makes a man choleric, resentful, and prompt to draw his sword even upon a friend, to revenge an insult. I recommend no such honour as this, a temper that feeds upon opinion, and is as fickle as its food; which often persuades men to destroy their peace, in order to defend their pride, and to pull down their house to build their monument. Such are the materials, and others might have been mentioned, out of which that noble edifice we call character is to be constructed.

But let me now consider how the fabric is to be carried forward; or in other words, what rules must be observed in its construction. It is first of all necessary, to fix upon your object, to determine with yourself what you would be. The builder of a house has his whole plan before him before he lays a brick or a stone; the poet has the plan of his poem before he writes a line; and the painter and sculptor their model before a stroke is given of the pencil or the chisel. So if you would attain to a wel-

formed character, you must first settle with yourselves what you would be, and what are the real elements of a good character. A mistake here is fundamental. No man can well be expected to rise higher than his own standard of excellence. Say to yourselves then, "What ought I to be? What would I be? What shall I be?" Settle this well, wisely and firmly.

It is also a first principle, that every man must be, under God, the builder of his own character: for no man can do it for him. He may have a house built for him, and indeed must if he have a house; but here, if he have a character at all, he must build for himself. God has condescended to become his architect, and laid down a perfect plan for him in his Word, and others by counsel and direction may assist him; but no assistance of this kind can dispense with his own labour. He may have money left to him, so that by possibility he may become rich without his own efforts; but no one can bequeath character to him. His own industry alone can obtain it.

Next to this it is of immense importance to understand that as no others can construct character for us, so neither will it come of itself or of chance; but must be the result of design and of effort. You may as rationally expect that a palace, or a temple, or a castle, would rise up by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, as that good habits will be formed by a contingent concurrence of actions or events. No. There must be a plan laid, a purpose formed, a rule observed, and an end invariably sought. A bad character may be formed almost without design: a man has only to yield himself up passively to the impulse of his innate evil propensities, and the force of external temptation, to be bad

without effort: just as weeds, brambles, and nettles grow in the wilderness without culture; while delicate garden flowers, or hot-house plants, must have much labour bestowed upon them. But is it not worth the trouble? A good reputation will better repay the labours bestowed upon it, than any other thing that can be contemplated by the human mind.

To advance another step, I may observe, that you not only should, but can, construct your own character. Have faith in God first of all, that he is willing and waiting to assist you, and then faith in yourselves; that by his blessing you can be something, do something, and own something, in this world. You cannot be ciphers but by your own choice; and by that same choice may be something far more in the arithmetic of life. Others, as I have said, cannot do it for you, but you may do it for yourself. It may seem a bold assertion, but it is a true one, you may be morally whatsoever you resolve to be. God has set no limit short of perfection upon the attainment of moral excellence: nor should we. Resolution is all but omnipotent. The power of man's will is wonderful. The greatest difficulty lies in having power to will, not in the power of will. This is one of the great differences between man and man; not only a difference as to grasp of intellect, but of power to will. Many can see as clearly as others, but they cannot will as resolutely. Hence it is of importance to cultivate the will as well as the intellect, the heart, and the memory. Determine to be something in the world and you will be something. Aim at excellence and excellence will be attained. "I cannot," has never accomplished any thing. "I will," has achieved wonders. It is surprising to see how diffi-

culties clear away before the all-subduing power of some men's will, and how all things fall into their schemes: no, not fall, but are pressed, into them. This is true in reference to almost all things, to wealth, to ambition, to knowledge; but it is truest of all in relation to character. Should there be any one listening to me at this moment, who has not yet attained to any high degrees of moral excellence; who has not yet formed a resolution to reach it; who has yielded perhaps to a desponding apprehension that it is beyond his reach; let him this night only take up, as he is authorised, yea, commanded to do, the all-conquering "I will, by God's help," and the commencement is made of moral excellence; of a good and noble character. This is what the most eloquent of modern essayists has exhibited with such force and beauty in his Essay on "Decision of Character."

Oh that I could inspire you, my young friends, at the very outset of life with an enthusiasm on this subject! O, that I could awaken, or foster, if it be implanted already, the lofty purpose of forming a character which earth shall admire and heaven approve! O, that I could breathe into you the purpose, not hastily or slightly, but deliberately and determinately formed, to be and do something in this world of your abode, and during this short life of your continuance in it! I see the career of unlimited excellence opening before you, and only needing the mighty volition to pursue it with success. Tell me not of disheartening discouragements, or of powerful temptations; I know them, I have felt them, and by the grace of God, I have conquered them: and what I have done, you may do. It was amidst those very temptations, and some discouragements, when younger than most of you, that the lecturer made up

his mind, not indeed to be a great man, for such an ambitious aspiration or idea never approached the horizon of his mind; but to the humbler wish, as it might be thought by some, to be a good man. It was in youth he resolved to build up a character, and commenced the effort. How far he has succeeded, he leaves others to determine. At any rate, to that resolution he owes, under God, the honour of addressing you on the present occasion.

It is of immense importance to recollect that comparatively minute circumstances, events, and influences, contribute to the formation of character. Men are very slow to learn the power and importance of little things, and the cumulative value of seeming trifles. In the world of morals nothing is little. A glance of the eye, a momentary opening of the ear, a single thought passing through the mind with the rapidity of lightning, if indulged on a forbidden subject, may leave a trace never to be effaced, and do mischief never to be undone through eternity. In the corporeal frame a pin-scratch may lead on to mortification; and death may enter in the invisible miasma of pestilence. Nor is it otherwise with our moral constitution. Great events and potent causations occur only at long intervals; small ones are always going on, and are ever depositing their products. It is very true, the first bold conception and broad outline of character, like the picture of the artist, is drawn by a single effort, perhaps a bold dash of his pencil or his chalk; but the filling up of the sketch is the result of innumerable little dots and strokes; and every dot and every stroke is the result of deliberation and design. One or two dots or strokes of wrong colour, or put in at a wrong place, would mar the whole. Not very unlike

this is the process we are now considering. Often is a resolution for future conduct formed, adopted, and fixed in an hour, yea a minute, which comprehends in itself the formation of a character, the history of a life, the moral existence of an eternity; all of which hang upon the decision of that brief term: but then there comes the filling-up of the picture, to this, the little events that are occurring every day and in every place, are contributing an influence. Nor must it be forgotten, how much one or two improper acts, in comparatively little things, may hinder the right formation, or deface the beauty, of the moral picture of character. How much time and labour it may require to counteract the bad influence which has been thus exerted!

It sometimes happens that a single occurrence is the hinge on which a man's whole character for life turns. One violent temptation, according as it is successfully resisted or complied with, may have the effect of a fixed determination for good or for evil. You will probably remember the instance that Foster gives in his Essay "On Decision of Character," of the young man who had wasted his paternal estate by his profligacy, and who upon surveying the lost property from a neighbouring hill, came to the determination to recover it again. The resolution was formed, and he immediately began to put it in execution, and succeeded. But I will relate a fact still more in point, which I think I have given in one of my other publications. See vol. v., pp. 401, 402.

What is said of little things may be also said of present time. Character is not something to be formed, but is ever being formed. It is not only a future, but a present process. It is evolving from every occurring

event, and it is suspended upon every passing moment. So that if you ask, Where character is formed, I reply, Everywhere. When? Always. By what means? By everything. What we would be in general, that we should be in each particular. What we would be in great things, that we should be in little ones: and what we would be through all futurity, that we should be in the passing moment.

Beware of eccentricity and oddities. We have all known characters, otherwise very good and commendable, sadly disfigured by them. There was something so odd and queer, simply ludicrous without being at all vicious, that it looked, forgive the simile, like a squint in what would have been otherwise a really beautiful face; or like a great wen upon a fair and symmetrical form. I am aware some persons have aimed at being peculiar, though they have small pretence to originality: and rather than be like other people, would wish to be distinguished by some deformity in their character. Despise such silly affectation, and be content with the excellences common to all lovely characters, rather than covet to be distinguished by what is disagreeable, though it may be only laughably so.

And as there are eccentricities to be avoided, so there are decorations of character to be studied and acquired. To advert again to the construction of a building, it may be made of substantial materials, and may have many good rooms, and answer well enough the purpose of a habitation, but all the while it may have a barn-like appearance, and have no tasteful ornament, no Ionic grace, no Corinthian elegance, nor even Doric chasteness. Or to refer to the human form, a man may have symmetry, strength, even beauty, but his bearing

may be low and vulgar, his manners repulsive, and his address unprepossessing. Is it not sometimes so with character? There may be the possession of sterling integrity, and great moral worth; in short, of all the things that are true, and honest, and pure, and just; but not of the things that are lovely. There is wanting the amiable temper, the courteous address, the attraction of kindness. It is a fine body in an uncomely dress; it is a lump of gold, but amorphous and unburnished; it is a diamond not cut and flashing with all the hues of the rainbow, but dull and covered with its earthy encrustations. Character is the best thing on earth: why not then invest it with all the charms of which it is susceptible, and compel men to love and admire it as they do a jewel; both for its own sake, and for the sake of its beautiful setting also? The character of every man, far more than his wealth, is his best possession, and should be so exhibited as not only to attract attention, but to excite admiration and emulation. We must endeavour to make virtue loved as well as esteemed.

Be conversant with the best models, whether living or to be found in books. Painters, sculptors, and architects, who would excel, study the productions of the best masters, and think nothing of the expense and labour of a journey to Athens, Rome, or Florence, to drink in the inspiration produced by a contemplation of the works of Raphael and Reubens, Phidias and Michael Angelo. A similar effect is produced on a mind athirst for moral excellence, by the perusal of the lives of men distinguished for their piety and virtue. Heroism is imbibed before the statues of heroes: patriotism before those of patriots; and piety and virtue before those of Christians and moralists. And if the tombs of the illustrious dead

assist us in the cultivation of their virtues, how much more does intercourse with living persons of distinguished excellence! What is the effect of our own recollections, or of a statue, or a picture, compared with living, speaking, breathing, acting patterns of distinguished piety and virtue. Oh, you say, to have spent one day with Howard, or Wilberforce, or one of the martyrs, or reformers, and to have heard the utterances of their piety, to have seen the beauty of their virtue, how would it have aided us in our attempts after moral excellence! Perhaps not so much as your intercourse with some other characters to whom I might refer you, I mean those of your own age, sex, and circumstances, who hold fast their integrity, and are patterns of every excellence; who are tried with your trials, assailed by your temptations, and yet are believers amidst scoffers, pure amidst the licentious, diligent amidst the idle, and honest amidst the thievish. He that walks with wise men shall be wise. Neighbouring fires brighten each other's flame, trees in a plantation aid each other's growth, and both virtue and vice gain courage from companionship. Precept is the rule for the formation of character, example is the plastic power which moulds it. Hence the immense and obvious advantages of such associations as that which I have the pleasure to address this evening. True it is that there is something partaking of the moral sublime in an instance of eminent solitary piety and virtue, standing firm and alone, uncorrupted and incorruptible, amidst surrounding corruption; resisting alike the silent but powerful influence of example, the arts of persuasion, and the frown of authority. Such an instance resembles a noble column standing erect amidst ruins, or the lofty and majestic

oak flourishing in solitude amidst a wilderness, strong without companions, and unsheltered and unprotected, bidding defiance to the fury of the elements. But how few trees, if planted in such an exposed situation, could stand erect, and grow and thrive! How much do the generality need the support and protecting influence of the clump or the plantation! And is it not so with the young, as regards the formation of their character? Do they not need association, fellowship, and all the directive and sustaining influence of companionship? Hence, I repeat, the value of such institutions as this, in which the saplings of the human race protect, support, and assist each other, under the patronage of veterans of the forest, which exhibit models for their growth, cover them with the shield of their noble tops, and spread over them their boughs to defend them from the heat of the sun, and the force of the hurricane.

I now advance a remark which deserves the most concentrated and serious attention of this whole assembly, as of momentous importance. Character, whether it be good or bad, is usually formed in youth, and formed then for both worlds. I admit that this is not always the case. Transformations sometimes take place in after-life, as great and striking as they are unexpected and beautiful. Vicious, profligate, and unmerciful men are changed into patterns of chastity, temperance, and benevolence, a change as great as if a temple rose on the ruins of a brothel, a palace on the site of hovels, a mansion of domestic peace where had been a den of wild beasts, and an abode of angels where was a pandemonium of fiends. But these instances are rare. Character, I repeat, is usually formed in youth. From fourteen to twenty-one is the crisis of

being, the hinge of destiny, the era for eternity. In childhood the soul is too soft to receive impressions, in age too hard; but youth is just that plastic state which receives and retains it. There is a certain stage in the early growth of an apple or a tree, when if characters are drawn upon its rind or bark, they will not only remain but grow with its growth, and enlarge with its increase, and be perpetuated through the whole existence of the fruit or the tree. So is it with the mind, what it receives in youth it usually retains through the whole period of its future existence.

III. But this leads on to the third part of this lecture, which is to consider the eternity of character. It is not in the power of the human intellect, or of the divine one either, to conceive of any thing in relation to this subject more momentous or more sublime than this; the declaration of which I almost wish I could make with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. I shall not here enter into any proof of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of reward and punishment. I shall take those momentous and awful truths for granted. Nor shall I dwell long on the ineffably sublime idea of eternity, that endless duration of existence which mocks the power of arithmetic to calculate, and of the human or angelic mind to grasp it. Eternity is an idea which can find no room to expand to all its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, but in the infinite mind of Him, who only in the full sense of the term is eternal, or from everlasting to everlasting. The future eternity, if I may be allowed the paradox of thus speaking of what has no relation to time, belongs to man, and is the measure of his existence. What do I look round upon, in surveying the audience which is

before me? Not the ephemeral beings, the flitting shadows, which, as dying creatures, they may appear to be. No, there is upon every man the stamp of immortality: there is a spirit which will fly beyond the flaming bounds of space and time.

> "The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
> Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years,
> But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
> Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
> The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

This is not merely a noble effusion of poetry, but the declaration of that precious volume which abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light: a declaration which raises the subject of immortality above the dreams of imagination, the speculations of philosophy, and the yearnings after existence inseparable from the nature of man, to place it among the realities of truth, the objects of faith, and the anticipations of hope. Such is the glorious possession, young men, of which infidelity and false philosophy would rob you: and by this dreadful felony would reduce you to its own miserable beggary, with no prospect but the grave, and no object of hope but annihilation. Such the dignity from which it would cast you down to the degradation of dying like a dog, after living like a man. Eternal God, on what are thine enemies and the foes of our race intent! How insane a project! How parricidal a zeal! To cover thy throne and our grave with the funeral pall of perpetual death, to bury thy Divinity and our humanity together in one everlasting grave, and hush thy name and our praises of it, in the unbroken silence of eternal night. Vain attempt! let them endeavour to extinguish the sun, and annihilate the planets: this were an

easy task compared with their endeavour to tear from the soul of man his convictions of the existence of God, and his hope of his own immortality.

Now through eternity there must be some character. No one can be negative there any more than here. We are always to be rational creatures, and of course are for ever to partake of some moral qualities; and these qualities are acquired in this world. All the positive information we can acquire upon this subject must be obtained from revelation: yet even reason suggests the probability of an eternity of character; or in other words, the perpetuity through eternity of the character we acquire in this world. We should entertain a presumption of this, if we reasoned only from analogy. It is true, that death separates the two states, and some may think will make a considerable and radical difference in the condition of the soul. But why? Death is wholly a physical change, operating only, as far as we know, upon the material part of our nature, the throwing down of the walls of the prison to let the captive escape. Disease of itself effects no moral change, and why should death? The moral consciousness remains in continuous and unchanged existence. Not only the same faculties continue, but the same moral qualities.

But what reason renders probable, revelation renders certain: every part of the sacred volume represents this world as a state of discipline and probation for the next, as bearing the same relation to a future world that boyhood and youth do to manhood. God has sent us here to acquire an eternal moral character. And he gives us the opportunity to do so. And we in reality do it. We may, if we so choose, obtain a bad one; there are incentives and temptations which will lead to it if we yield

to them. But there are also opportunities and facilities, if we will avail ourselves of them, of an opposite nature. Time decides for eternity. The probation ends with life, and death sets the seal not only on destiny, but on character. From that moment the good are good, and the bad are bad, for ever. The one are removed, as they are, into a state where moral excellence will have no more check to its developement, nor any more temptations to corrupt it; and those who are bad, to a state where sin will have no means for its resistance or suppression. All then pass under the sentence, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." The image of the heavenly is thus stamped upon the soul on earth, and the likeness of the eternal in time. The ultimate moral purpose of Christianity is to produce an everlasting character, and for that end to confer the elements of it in this world, to originate in each man's history and moral being an infinite series of moral actions; to commence an endless progression in holy conduct, and an eternal practice and enjoyment of all that is true, and beautiful, and good. The present is thus the parent of the future: character on earth is the bud of character in heaven. All the moral elements of eternity are acquired and found in the soul during its temporary sojourn here. Each man walks the earth an incipient seraph, or a commencing fiend. Every moral thing we do stretches far beyond the sphere of its doing: it is a causation for eternity. Eternal issues are the result of every action, the embodiment of every thought, the echo of every word. What we are now is the prediction of what we

shall be for ever. Every action partaking of moral quality, whether of a good or a bad man, leaves upon the tablet of the soul, a mark which will be legible there, millions of ages hence. Moral character works out its own issues, digs its own hell, or builds its own heaven. In each case it is in another world, the natural and necessary consummation of man's present self in this. He puts off the mortal and puts on the immortal, but as is the mortal such also is the immortal. Man is called a shadow as to his transient existence, but as to his character, he is the shadow which coming eternity casts before it.

How much is there in man's history that is not eternal; gifts, wealth, rank, fame, connexions, are all of the earth, earthly, and perish in the using: they form part of the fashion of this world, that gay and glittering pageant which passes away; but character remains. Whatever is not eternal, character is. Whatever else we may drop on the borders of the grave, this we shall carry with us, in us, into whatever state we then enter. It cannot be separated from ourselves, for it is ourselves. If we love and respect it, we shall retain the object of our affection for ever: and if we loathe and despise it, we must still retain it for ever. How instructive and impressive is this to every man, of every age and every condition of life; but especially to the young: for as it is in youth that character is formed for manhood and all future life, so of course youth is the period of forming it for eternity.

Happy will it be for you, my young friends, if this night your attention shall be drawn to this momentous subject. Character, as regards this world, is of unspeakable importance to yourself. Can you possess

any self-respect without it? How terrible is it to be self-despised, to be vile in our own estimation, to be an object of scorn to ourselves! But on the other hand, how delightful is it to possess that self-esteem which is as far from pride and self-conceit on the one side, as it is from a spurious and affected modesty on the other! It is not humility but ignorance which deprives a man of the enjoyment of conscious rectitude: true humility consists in thinking of ourselves neither higher nor lower than we ought to do: nor is it necessary to the exercise of this virtue that we should deprive ourselves of all the enjoyments of a good conscience.

Character will be a shield in some instances against temptation, for where it is very eminent, the seducer will think it too high too reach, or too impregnable to be stormed. In other cases, it has constituted a defence against slander, by placing its possessor above suspicion. Oftentimes it is taken at once as a guarantee for innocence against imputation. A man of well-established reputation is safe in the confidence of those who know him. They acquit him without a trial, and believe his innocence without the judgment of a court. Slander may indeed fix its fangs for a moment upon a spotless character; but such a character has within itself an antidote to the poison, and rises from the temporary wound with invigorated strength and brightened beauty. Character secures the esteem of the wise and the good, and even bad men pay it the tribute of their admiration, and the compliment of their envy. An inordinate craving after applause is a morbid condition of the soul, the feverish thirst of disease; but a just appreciation of the unsought esteem of those whose

discriminating and judicious praise is never bestowed but upon what deserves it, is at once an exercise and reward of virtue. Character will aid you in your endeavour to do good and to obtain your proper standing in society. "Character is power: character is influence." Men are moved not only by what is said, but by the persons who say it. Reputation gives weight to advice, inspires confidence, and attracts co-operation. Success in life depends upon it. Character, if not capital, often supplies the place of it. It is one of the ladders of ascent to wealth and respectability. It is not only a benefit to yourselves, but to others. It is a rich contribution to domestic comfort; an essential to the smooth and easy working of the great commercial system; the breakwater which resists the tidal waves and ocean-storms of moral evil, that are ever threatening to inundate the interests of society; a rebuke to the bad, an encouragement to the good, a model for imitation to the present generation, and a rich legacy and a posthumous benefit to the generation to come. A man's character outlives himself and lasts as long as his name: it is his most enduring monument and his truest history: and therefore every one is under solemn obligation to consult his posthumous power to do good or harm. The reminiscences of his virtues or his vices may be withering or fostering the interests of society when he is sleeping in his grave.

But to return, in conclusion, to the eternal aspect of character. How anxious, how careful, and how laborious have been some men, to build up a reputation which posterity shall know and admire! When the poet was reproached for the slowness of his verses, how impressive and dignified was his reply: "I write for

immortality." Young men, you are living, speaking, acting for immortality, always and every where building up a character that is to last through eternity. It is an awful thought, under the weight of which the strongest mind might stagger, in the contemplation of which the boldest might tremble, and in the comprehension of which the most ambitious might find a boundless scope for its aspirations and its pursuits.

Is it not wise sometimes to ask ourselves the question, "What we shall be hereafter?" How soon this is spoken, but who shall reply? Think how profoundly this question, this mystery, concerns us; in comparison with this, what are all the other questions which curiosity or science may ask? What to us the future career of events, or the progress of states and empires, or the history of our globe, or of our whole material universe? What we shall be, we ourselves, is the matter of infinite and surpassing interest. How overpowered are we in attempts to realize to our thought, what nevertheless will be! "I that am the man, that am here, that am thus, what shall I be, and where, and how, when this vast system of nature has passed away, what, after ages more than there are leaves or blades of grass on the whole surface of this globe, or atoms in its enormous mass, shall have expired? Through all that inconceivable period, that infinite, eternal duration, there will still be the conscious I am. Can it be possible then we should not now ask, What shall I be? What character shall I bear?"*

It surely cannot be too sermonic, before the members of a Young Men's Christian Association, to recommend

* See Foster's lecture on our ignorance of our future mode of existence.

for such an object the devout study of the Holy Scriptures, and earnest prayer for the aid of the Holy Spirit? That precious volume is the best mould in which the character can be cast, even for time, and it is the only one in which it can be cast for eternity. Be much in converse with your Bible. It is the seal of the Spirit of God. Yield your mind to the faith of its doctrines, your heart, softened by the power of prayer to the impression of its precepts, and your life to the influence of its examples; for in so doing you will receive a character, which after having procured many of the advantages and much of the happiness of earth, and after having constituted your richest honour and noblest distinction among your fellow-mortals, will accompany you to the Paradise of God, where the bud of every virtue, now often exposed to ungenial blasts and nipping frosts, shall blossom in unfading beauty, beyond the reach of temptation, and the taint of corruption. Or, to change the figure, where that character, here now copied, though but imperfectly, from the moral attributes of God, will be perfect even as He is perfect: and by flourishing in immortal loveliness, will realise the subject of this lecture, that eternity will be the duration of that character which is founded on religious principle, and constructed of christian virtues.

THE FORCE AND IMPORTANCE OF HABIT.

A NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS

Delivered to the Young Men's Christian Association, in the Town Hall Birmingham January 4th 1856.

My Young Friends,

I rise to address you, standing as it were on the threshold of a new year, when the past is all gone never to return, and the future is all unknown. Happy would it be for us all, if, instead of surveying the flow of time with a sort of dreamy pensiveness, we listened with solemn and practical attention to its perpetual waterfall, tumbling into the gulf of eternity below, and sending up from its ceaseless roar, the admonition of scripture, "Redeem the time."

It was said by the wisest of men, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning." This of course has its limitation. In multitudes of cases however it is strikingly true. But it will be most true in the case of those who end in glory everlasting that life which commenced amidst the weakness and helplessness of infancy, and was spent amidst the temptations, the sorrows, and the trials of this mortal state. What may be said

of life in its total may also be said of every one of its well spent years. In whatever circumstances you are beginning this year, may you at its close have to acknowledge with joy and gratitude that its end is better than its beginning. Better may it be in every respect; better even as it regards your worldly condition; may all your reasonable and proper hopes be turned into fruition; all your fears be dissipated; your sorrows be exchanged for joys; and every day, even to the last, be a step towards a favourable end. Especially may this be the case as regards your conduct and your characters. It may be hoped, that as the end of the year always calls for reflection, you have reflected, and that before the scenes of the last year have been lost in the haze of the past, you have asked yourselves the question, "What lessons for my guidance in the future, are to be derived from a review of past events?" To some perhaps a stern and accusing voice cries out, "Reform." Be wise! listen to the admonition, and turn from your evil ways; then will the end of this year be far better than its beginning. Happy are others to whom the past year on its retiring said with notes of encouragement "Persevere." Happier still will they be if they not only continue, but improve, in all that is excellent; and be among those who move upon wheels not upon hinges. To them how much better will be the close than the commencement of the year. Let it ever be recollected that wisdom walks before time; opportunity with it; and repentance, or approbation, as the conduct may be, after it.

I have selected for the subject of my address this evening, the force and importance of habit. Could I have chosen a more interesting or momentous one? By

habit is meant, "that facility in doing any thing, and in cases where our emotions and appetites are concerned that tendency to do it, which one acquires by custom." The frequent repetition of an act begets a habit. I shall not detain you by any philosophical enquiry into the origin of our habits, by which I mean an investigation into the reason why the repetition of an act produces this facility and tendency; suffice it to say that metaphysicians generally resolve it into that law of our nature which we call "suggestion," or "the association of ideas." Habit has been called "a second nature," and it has also been said, and how truly the sequel will disclose, "that man is a bundle of habits."

I. I shall first make some remarks on habit in general. We apply the word "habit" most commonly and most properly to action, rather than to suffering; and yet in ordinary discourse it is not unusual to speak of a habit of endurance. But even with this passiveness is mixed up something of activity. The mind of a person in suffering stirs and braces itself up to endure. Fortitude includes an act of the will; and one resolute purpose to endure prepares for and makes more easy a second, till the habit of endurance is acquired. And a most important habit it is. How many of the avocations of life, which to those who are not called to them appear absolutely intolerable, are rendered if not easy yet endurable by custom! Who, in other and less laborious situations can see a bricklayer's labourer, spending a whole day in the heat of summer in mounting a ladder with his hundred-weight of bricks, to the top of a high building, without wondering by what power his physical strength held out? Custom has rendered it possible by giving strength and flexibility to

his muscles and hardihood to his mind: so also as to suffering as well as to labour custom produces a habit of endurance. You have all perhaps read of the man who was confined thirty-six years in the Bastile, and had become so habituated to his seclusion, that on his liberation he begged to be conducted back to his gloomy chamber. But the most remarkable instance of this I have ever met with, is the case mentioned by Sir George Staunton. He visited a man in India who had committed murder, and in order to save his life, and what to him was of still greater consequence his caste, had submitted to the penalty of sleeping for seven years, upon a bedstead studded with points of iron resembling nails, but not so sharp as to penetrate the flesh. Sir George saw him in the fifth year of his probation, when his skin had become like the hide of a rhinoceros, but still more callous. At that time he could sleep comfortably on his bed of thorns, and remarked that at the expiration of his term, he should most likely continue that system from choice, which he had been obliged to adopt from necessity. And instances of superstitious inflictions of bodily sufferings, by devotees of various religions, equally astonishing in illustration of the power of habit in the way of endurance, could be cited, were it at all necessary. Even such cases are replete with instruction and encouragement, inasmuch as they indicate the goodness and wisdom of Providence, in endowing us with a power of bearing, with tolerable composure, the various complications of human suffering: while they also encourage us to expect that if called to bear such burdens, we shall find that custom will not fail in our case to lessen the weight of that pressure which we might be too ready to conclude to be insupportable. It may be, young men

that difficulties, trials, and labours, yea, even great sufferings, await you in life; but fear not, nothing but what is common to man will befal you; nothing but what has been endured; and therefore nothing but what, by God's grace, and the power of habit, will be rendered endurable by you.

But I mean to make this lecture bear chiefly on the habit of action. I repeat what I have already said that man is a bundle of habits. These are of various kinds, relating to corporeal motions, mental exercises, social demeanour, and moral and religious conduct. Look at every man in each of these departments of his active life, and you will find him the creature of habit. Few, very few, of his acts are entirely new, unaffected, and uninfluenced by other antecedent acts of the same kind. Nearly his whole course of action is made up of repetitions of previous acts. Every single thought, word, and deed, seems a link of a chain, a link which is drawn by others that went before, and draws others that follow it. You artizans, what was the skilful stroke of the hammer file or stamp to day but the effect of habit? You accountants, what was that disentanglement of a financial complexity, and that accurate drawing out a balance sheet, but the force of habit? You noble minded youth, what was that successful resistance to day of a strong temptation, but the effect of habit? You liar, drunkard, swearer, sensualist, if such characters have found their way into our assembly this evening, what was that act of vice last night but the effect of habit? Yes, wherever we go, whatever we do, we are followed, actuated, mastered by habit. How impressive is this? Of what a composite nature is our character and conduct! If we are this bundle of habits, how important, and

how necessary is it that we should untie it, and carefully examine of what sticks and stuff it is made up. And by a previous act of caution how careful should we be what sticks and stuff we put into the bundle. To day you have been doing something, and to-morrow you will repeat it, that is increasing both your facility and your tendency to do good or evil.

2. It is of importance to remember, that though we are made up of habits, they grow out of single actions, and consequently, while we should be careful and solicitous about the habits we form, we must be no less so about the single acts out of which they grow. In making any composition, attention must of course be paid to the individual elements of which it is made up. The baker who wishes to produce a good loaf, must be careful about all his three ingredients, the flour the barm and the water; each must be attended to. The man who would be a good artizan, must take care of every single manipulation, for his ultimate skill depends on each. The artist, who would attain to eminence, and bring out a good picture, must take care of every stroke of his brush, for his skill and success depend upon the aggregate of all his individual touches. So regarding habits, we may be too apt to think little of individual acts. There are two insidious temptations to evil which have been more successful in leading to bad habits, than perhaps any others that have ever prevailed. One is, the suggestion, "Oh, it is but a little matter, even if it be wrong." If it be wrong it cannot be little. There may I admit be various degrees of evil by comparison, but abstractedly nothing is little that is wrong. What is relatively little leads to, and prepares the way for, what is positively great. There is a germinating vitality

in all evil, as surely as there is in all good, and as the latter tends to what is better, so does the former to what is worse. A man who does evil, though it may seem little loses his timidity and gains courage to go on after each step. Habits that have brought ruin for both worlds in their train have begun in what at the time seemed a mere peccadillo, over which it was then thought that the tenderest conscience needed not to blush. The great Tempter is too skilful in the arts of seduction to alarm the mind by asking too much at once. A great sin would startle the conscience, and it must be prepared for it by the frequent repetition of little ones; the habit of these once formed, the transgressor is prepared for entering upon evils of a more flagrant nature. The other temptation which leads to bad habits is the suggestion "Only this once." Out of that only once have come millions of instances of ruin for time and eternity. It is the devil's most artful and most deceitful bait. And that shows the importance, the infinite moment, of avoiding the first wrong step. That single act which is the first deviation from the path of rectitude contains enfolded in itself, all the folly, mischief, wickedness and ruin of the consummation of an evil course. I read of a servant whose first act of dishonesty was making free with an article of luxury in the closet, and who having that once, and for the first time, tampered with conscience, went on from step to step till she acquired a habit of dishonesty, which led her to the gallows. Young man now halting and hesitating about some action, the folly and criminality of which are quite clear, urged on by the seductive voice "Only this once," yield, and you are undone; resist, refuse, and you are a conqueror for life. Upon that

single temptation, as upon its hinge, may turn your destiny. The habit of resistance may come out of that stern refusal. Your next victory will be easier, and the next to that easier still.

3. It scarcely need be said that habits are gradually and very insidiously formed. Whether they are good or bad, they are not acquired all at once. They steal over us by imperceptible advances. My definition implies this. They are formed by the repetition of single acts. This is the most impressive view we can take of the subject. If any confirmed drunkard, swearer, gambler, or the slave of any other vicious habit, had when he commenced his downward course, been solicited to submit to wear the fetters which at last were rivetted on him, he would have started with horror at the proposal, and exclaimed, like one of old, "Am I a dog that I should do this?" And yet the man became the dog to do it. Deceit is one of the characteristics of sin, and its deceitfulness is manifested by the slow and almost imperceptible manner in which it leads the sinner on in his downward career. We find this noticed by moral writers in every age and country. Many of the ancients used to represent it by the very expressive similitude, that the way of vice lies down hill; that if you take but a few steps, the motion is soon accelerated, and becomes so violent and impetuous, that it is almost impossible to arrest it. Or, to change the metaphor, the growth of habit is like that of plants and animals, so slow that advance can only be ascertained by a comparison of distant periods or stages: nutriment goes in particle by particle, ever increasing the bulk and strength, without either of them, at the time, being perceived by others, or without the subject being con-

scious of it himself. Shall I be thought to sink the dignity either of the lecture or the lecturer, if I borrow an illustration from one of the most common of our neutral habits; I mean neutral as regards virtue or vice. No one, I presume, not even the most determined and advanced practiser of it, will pretend to call snuff-taking a virtue: and I certainly shall not be so severe a censor, or so discourteous to the followers of this nasal gratification, as to call it a vice. Whatever I call it, I shall not be much in danger, by my remarks upon it, to wound the feelings or incur the displeasure of the gentler sex, for I believe the snuff-box, once not unfrequently seen in the hand of the fair, is all but universally abjured by them, and certainly eau de Cologne is a delicious substitute for powdered tobacco. But to come to the gentlemen adepts in the use of the snuff-box, may I not appeal to their experience for the very insidious and gradual formation of the habit. Remember, I am scarcely presuming to condemn the habit, lest I should incur the wrath of all the tobacconists in existence, together with the persecution of their million customers; yet I certainly do not recommend it, nor do I believe that even the former will recommend it to those who have not yet been initiated into the mysteries of the practice. Now observe how the habit grew. First, some fellow traveller by the railway, when regaling his own nose, politely held out his box to them and they, too polite to refuse, dipped their finger and thumb into the receptacle of the bewitching dust, rendered more seductive by the elegance of the box. The titillation having produced the luxury of a good sneeze, an association of ideas was formed between a snuff-box and pleasure which the last sight of one led to. Next time

when in company after dinner, the silver or golden box accompanied the decanter in its perambulation round the table, the neophyte very readily dipped his fingers into the fascinating powder. His next step was to beg that which had been offered him before. The gratification increased with repetition. Still he had no thought of being a snuff-taker in the full meaning of the expression, and felt no wish first, and would not purchase a box; but there could be no harm in buying a small quantity and keeping it wrapped up in paper in the cupboard to repair to when inclination excited the desire. It was soon, however, found inconvenient to have to go to the cupboard for a pinch, and if there was no harm in keeping the article in paper, there would be none in keeping it in silver or papier mâché: and if no harm in keeping it in the cupboard, none at all in a waistcoat pocket. A box is at length bought, not indeed like Peter Pindar's razors, for show but not for use, for it soon becomes almost a necessary of life. I need not proceed further; in this way the habit grows, and from the following facts see to what it may come. A friend of mine was sent for by an elderly gentleman to advise with him in reference to some public business which was troubling him. On his being introduced, there stood before him a man of venerable aspect, but sadly disfigured by the habit to which I am now alluding. His upper lip covered with snuff, his shirt and cravat in like condition, his waistcoat and smallclothes sprinkled over with snuff, his very shoes receiving at every dip into the box, the refuse which did not find its way to the nostrils, already too full to accept more, till at length he appeared almost as brown with snuff as a miller is white with flour. Still he kept a large box in full work, interject-

ing every fresh part of his sorrowful tale with another pinch. My friend, astonished at the spectacle, exclaimed, with half disgust and half indignation, "What on earth makes you take so much snuff?" "Ah, sir," exclaimed his sorrowing wife, "You may well say so, will you believe it, he first bought only a quarter of an ounce, and it has gone on increasing, till now he buys a whole bladder at a time." Behold, young men, the force of habit. I beg pardon of the gentlemen of the snuff box, multitudes of whom are among the greatest, the best, and the most useful of their species; but to whose greatness, goodness, and utility, their nasal propensity adds but little, except it be in the way of contributing to the five millions sterling, which find their way to the exchequer of our country in the shape of duty upon tobacco, being five times as much as is raised for all the Missionary Societies and Bible Societies in existence.

4. There is this difference which ought to be pointed out between good and bad habits: that while the latter are formed without intention, the former are often, and should be always, produced by design. No man in his senses sits down and deliberately says, "I will become an habitual drunkard, swearer, liar, or gamester." These customs come on, as I have shewn, insidiously, and by degrees, and without design. Those who are addicted to them do not intentionally go beyond single acts. But the man who determines to attain to excellence of any kind determines at the same time, or should do so, to go on with the repetition of single acts, till he has acquired the habit. Aware of the power of this, and often feeling the strength of temptation and the weakness of his own nature, he longs to acquire fixedness in the

practice of what is right, by adding the power of habit to the force of principle, and thus stand all prepared to resist the assaults that are made upon his piety and virtue.

5. It is an undoubted fact, and a very natural one, and it should be well considered, that one habit often leads to another both as regards good ones and bad ones. In the bodily frame, one disease sometimes generates another; while also the healthy action of one part of the frame aids to keep others sound. So it is in the mental economy: one bad propensity leads to others, and one virtue to another. Smoking leads in many cases to drinking, drinking to idleness, and idleness to many vices. Extravagance leads often to peculation, and peculation to lying; indecorous apparel and love of admiration have often led to prostitution; sabbath breaking to bad company; and bad company to almost everything bad. And as all vices are cognate and attractive to others, so are all virtues. Piety towards God must of necessity lead to morality towards man; industry to sobriety, sobriety to economy. There is, however, one operation of even good habits which needs to be pointed out to you, as it may lead you wrong; and that is, carrying them so far in what may be called the line of their own direction as to run into evil. Thus, frugality may degenerate into parsimony; beneficence into a mischievous, undiscriminating, and lavish diffusiveness; candour may become indifference to truth; deference to the opinions of others, slavishness of mind. It is said that many who have been reclaimed by total abstinence from the misery and poverty of drunkenness to a course of sobriety and economy, have carried this so far as to become selfish and parsimonious.

6. I now arrive at the facts announced by all writers, and confirmed by all observation and all experience, that habits once formed, though not absolutely invincible, are broken with extreme difficulty. Who, that has ever made the trial, will not attest this fact? Why, if we have acquired the habit of an ungraceful position of the body, or an inelegant pronunciation, or any ridiculous mode of address, and wish to break ourselves of it, how hard do we find it to get rid of it, even when done from mere forgetfulness, and without appetite or inclination! How much more when all the power of internal desire comes in to confirm the practice, and to resist the attempt to unmanacle the poor slave! How many smokers have determined to do battle with the pipe, and after an ineffectual struggle against the habit have been vanquished at last! An amusing instance of this kind came under my own knowledge. A young man who had acquired the habit of smoking entered as a student for the ministry at one of our colleges, where smoking was forbidden. From peculiar circumstances a dispensation in his favour was granted him. He however encountered so much petty persecution in the way of gibes and ridicule from his fellow-students, who were anxious to break his habit, that he made a solemn vow he would not take a pipe in his mouth for a week. His sense of the privation was so acute and distressing that he could not conceive the agonies of starvation to be more intolerable; and he determined, when the week was ended, to resume his favourite gratification. Having made up his mind to this, he set about seeking how he could keep his vow in the letter and still enjoy at least something of his taste for tobacco-smoke. One of the students took pity on him, sat by

his side with a lighted pipe, drew in a large whiff, and then blew it into the mouth of the smoker. There he would sit for half an hour together. When the week was ending, he sat up to twelve o'clock, and then flew to the tobacco-box and pipe with such an eagerness as if he would have eaten both, and sat up smoking nearly all night.* Behold the slavery of habit! O why will men bring themselves into bondage to such tastes, such artificial habits? Is it becoming the dignity of our rational nature? What a potency has that Virginian leaf acquired over the habits of mankind!

Perhaps there is no habit so universal, and so hard to conquer as that of drunkenness. This enemy, when he has gained the complete mastery, is all but invincible. The craving of this appetite is so urgent, the misery of the inebriate when not under the influence of liquor is so intense, the stings of his conscience are sometimes so venomous, and his remorse so tormenting, the wretchedness he occasions to his wife and children is so desolating, that in addition to the gratification of his lusts, he flies to the bottle as a refuge and a hiding-place from his own reflections. Said a man of fortune and family when remonstrated with on his drinking habits, "If a glass of spirits were placed before me, my propensity is so strong, that I should drink it though I knew I should be damned the next moment!" I once read of the case of a young man who began life with fair prospects of prosperity and happiness. He married a lovely young woman, had a family, succeeded in business, and all went well till he acquired a habit of drinking, when of course he neglected his business and came to ruin. Stung with remorse at

* This was Mr Mack, afterwards of Clipstone.

seeing the misery he had brought upon his wife and family, he determined to reform, and struggled hard against his dreadful foe, and at length succeeded. Reformation was effected, and again the sun of his prosperity shone out from behind the clouds. All went on well for a time, till he fell again under the power of temptation, and relapsed into his former habit, and ruin again was the sequence. To break his habit, he went a voyage for two years in a temperance ship, which allowed no liquors to be carried except for medicinal purposes. He was restored to his family a reformed drunkard; and by industry and total abstinence, rose again to comfort and some measure of prosperity. Temptation of a peculiarly strong nature once more assailed him and he fell; still he determined to carry on the struggle, and as a next resource, got himself admitted into a lunatic asylum, and after some time came out to make another trial. He then went on well for a considerable time, and gave all the appearances and hopes of an emancipated slave, when a fiend, for I can call him nothing else, tempted him to take again to the fatal glass. For a while he stoutly resisted the temptation, till his seducer, knowing his weak point, as a man of somewhat proud spirit, jeered, taunted, and goaded him as being under "petticoat government," and afraid of his wife. In a fit of passion he yielded, touched the fascinating potion, awoke the drinking appetite, plunged again into the depth of intoxication, and then in a fit of despair took poison and died the death of the suicide. His wife sent for the tempter, conducted him into the dead man's chamber, threw back the sheet which covered his face, and simply said, "Behold your victim."

Young men, learn then how closely riveted are the

chains of habit. Still the rivets may be broken, the chains cast off, and the slave go free. Reason, reflection, resolute determination, and the help of God, will enable you to burst the strongest bonds of the strongest habit. I have an intimate friend still living, once the miserable captive of infidelity and inebriety, and in his sins so wretched, so weary of his habits and his life, that despairing of ever conquering his deadly foe, he grasped a razor, and was about to apply it to his throat, and reeking with self-murder, rush into the presence of an angry God. Happily he was restrained, applied himself again to the struggle, and was victorious, and lived not only to become a model of sobriety and sanctity, but to be eminently useful by the productions of his pen. But though so holy a man, and so well fortified by reason, religion, and his own consciousness of the happiness of temperance, he is so afraid of his former foe and every thing that could awaken it into renewed activity and assault, that he has, I believe, never from the hour of his reform, suffered one drop of intoxicating liquors to touch his palate.

Permit me now to refer to some particular habits, both bad and good. I will first of all refer to the former.

And should I not place in front of these drinking? That fatal habit which is the feeder of crime, pauperism, profanity, and lunacy; whose dark and fetid tide is ever rolling through this christian land; which destroys more bodies and souls than war, pestilence, or famine, or perhaps more than all these together. This monster vice, which ought never to be viewed but with hatred and disgust, in addition to its own dreadful power over its miserable subject, is aided in its destructive influence

by all the fascination of music, song, and social gratification. Drinking is represented as the companion of merry hearts, the enlivener of festive scenes, the symbol of friendship, the sign of liberty, the assuager of grief, and the source of every pleasure; and thus that which should be depicted as a demon, is set forth in the garb of an angel. I do not say that beastly drunkenness is ever thus presented; no, but that which leads to it, the cheerful glass. Young men beware! all the confirmed sots in existence were sober men once, not excepting that poor miserable wretch, whose vices made him, before he died, a living mass of corruption, a prey to worms on this side the grave, and whom earth, sickened and tired of her load, heaved from her lap, and hell from beneath moved to meet at his coming. Even that loathsome object was once a sober youth, his mother's pride, his father's boast, till in an evil hour he was lured by bad companions to drink the social glass. Having loved it first for company's sake, he soon grew to love it for its own. Custom prduced the habit, and the habit at last that spectacle of poverty, disease, horrible wretchedness, and death more horrible.

Next, I would guard you against a habit of idleness. Idleness is not only a vice in itself, but is an inlet to all other vices. Some one in casting up his accounts put down a very large sum per annum for his idleness. But there is another account more awful than that of our expenses, in which many will find that their idleness has contributed mainly to the balance against them. From its very inaction, idleness becomes, ultimately, the most active cause of evil; as a palsy is more to be dreaded than a fever. The Turks have a proverb, which says, that "The devil tempts all other men, but

that idle men tempt the devil." The Italians have another, "Idleness is the mother of all vice." The Spaniards have another, "Idleness in youth makes way for a painful and miserable old age." All nations have seen the evil and condemned it; and no habit is more readily learned or broken with more difficulty. The first time a youth refuses to try a thing because it costs him trouble, he has spun the first thread of the cord that is to bind up his faculties, both of body and soul, for destruction.

Ought I not to mention, as a most pernicious habit, a proneness to get in debt? How sunk, not only in the opinion of others, but of his own, is he who is in debt. "The borrower is servant," says Solomon, "to the lender." No man in such a situation is his own master, he is never at ease, the creditor is his tormentor, and when the claimant ceases to dun him, his own memory furnishes a rack on which he is stretched, often in horrible torture. This, like every other vice, has its infancy, growth, and maturity. How hurried and trembling is the man in his first application for a loan of money! Hear the confession of that strange and melancholy compound of piety and irreligion, industry and idleness, ardent hopes and deep despondency, domestic virtue and social recklessness, poor Haydon, the artist, whose fine genius was ruined by the self-conceit with which it was united, and the obstinacy which would take no hint for its guidance and improvement. After he had borrowed from all his friends, and worn them out to pay his debts, he had recourse to one of those vampires, the money-lenders, who suck the blood of the needy, by loans on exorbitant interest.

"In an evil hour," said he, "I had recourse to money-lenders,

the bane, the curse, the pestilence, to indigent genius. Never shall I forget the agitation of my frame as I first crossed the threshold of a money-lender; my knees shook under me. I had resisted a father and a mother's tenderest affections, and I was now standing at the door of a money-lender like a culprit, poor, sinking fast into ruin, and in debt, though at the height of reputation. The seeds of all my ruin were sown the day of entering the den of that reptile."

Alas, poor Haydon, thy own melancholy course and its tragic end, furnish among other lessons, a solemn warning against the practice of accumulating debts. Young men, guard against this vice and every thing that leads to it, an excessive love of pleasure, vices that entail expense, and extravagance in dress and personal decoration. There are other tastes besides that of drunkenness which lead to this. I heard of a young man, in this town, who plunged himself into debt, difficulty, and disgrace, by the habitual and immoderate use of that introduction to many evil habits, the cigar. And he was only one of the myriads of victims to the use of tobacco.

Gambling has with multitudes become a habit that has maddened their passions, destroyed their peace, squandered their fortunes, beggared their families, and ruined their souls. More self-murders have been perpetrated by this habit, than by almost any other: and the gamester, if he die a martyr to his profession, is trebly ruined. He adds his soul to every other loss, and by the act of suicide, renounces earth, forfeits heaven, and ensures hell. Nor is self-destruction the only kind of murder to which gambling often leads. Have we forgotten the horrid tragedy of the Thurtell plot, for the murder of Weare, which occurred a few years ago? And have we not also been horrified again within the last few weeks with the recitals of another atrocious

deed of murder which in part was prompted by gambling liabilities? At one period of their lives, the perpetrators of those dreadful acts of crime would have shuddered at the idea of murder: but they acquired by little and little the habit of iniquity, and the habit at length mastered all their feelings of virtue, till they could deliberately, for money, take away the life of a fellow creature with as little repugnance as they could that of a dog. Behold the hardening nature of sin. Gambling calls into activity many of the worst passions of human nature. Cupidity, craft, envy, malice, selfishness, all are the imps of iniquity begotten of this parent demon. It is truly said by the proverb, "Gaming hath the devil under the table, to go shares with the winner: and therefore the best throw of the dice is to throw them away." There is one species of this vice which I am sorry to know prevails in this town, I mean betting houses, to which lists of the running horses at all the principal races of the country are regularly sent, and a system of destructive gambling perpetually kept up. A law was passed some two or three years since for the suppression of these haunts of iniquity in the metropolis: and why should it not be extended to the provinces? I was ignorant of this matter till I was lately informed of it by a broken hearted father, who wrote me a most affecting letter, imploring me to use my influence in putting a stop to this mischief, in order that other parents might not, like him, have to mourn over a son moral and virtuous till lured to one of these receptacles, when he acquired a habit of gambling, robbed his master to pay his debts, and fled the country to escape from justice. Young men, take warning from this example. There is no custom which produces such mental intoxication,

keeps up such intense excitement as this, and which more surely becomes a confirmed and destructive habit.

I now pass to the other division of habits, I mean good ones; and these of course are as numerous as the bad ones, since every vice has its opposite virtue. Goodness itself, in the generic sense of the word, as containing whatsoever things are just, and pure, and honest, and true, and lovely, and of good report, is the habitual practice of the beautiful, the true, the useful. Do not fear to determine and undertake to form any habit which is desirable and allowable, for it can be formed, and that with more ease than you may at first suppose. Contemplate the desirableness of the habit, and earnestly covet it. Begin at once its formation, looking up to God by prayer for divine assistance, and set about it with fixedness of purpose. Let some effort be made every day; go on notwithstanding occasional defects; and by repetition the custom will soon settle into a habit that will be both easy and pleasant. He who is good only by fits and starts; by impulses, which are only occasional, and by purposes, which are only formed at long and rare intervals, will never be distinguished for goodness at all. Here again I will refer to Haydon. In his diary is the following entry, "My fits continue; I am all fits; fits of work and idleness, fits of reading, fits of writing, fits of Italian, fits of Greek, fits of Latin, fits of French, fits of Napoleon, fits of the army, fits of the navy, fits of religion." This was painfully true. And what was the sequel? A life of debt, failure, misery, and disappointment, till he killed himself in a fit of despair. Young men, do not let your life be a bundle of fits, but of habits, and these all of the right kind. Shall I name them? I can do little more than this. I begin with

Industry, but let it not be fitful but habitual, not spasmodic but regular. It is truly wonderful what persevering industry has accomplished; what prodigies of art, science, learning, and wealth it has produced. It has in a thousand instances supplied the lack of genius, and in others carried it on to the performance of wonders. Make up your mind that industry must be the price of all you obtain, and begin at once to lay down the cost. Industry is only to be acquired by custom. Indolence seems natural to many, and can be overcome only by a hard struggle, but every victory you gain over sluggishness makes the next triumph more facile, till it is easier for you to be busy than to be lazy.

And as a part of industry, be an early riser.

Franklin says, "He that rises late, may trot all day and not have overtaken his business at night." Buffon, the celebrated French naturalist, gives us the history of his authorship in a few words, "In my youth," says he, "I was very fond of sleep, which robbed me of a great deal of my time, but my poor Joseph (his servant) was of great service in enabling me to overcome it. I promised to give him a crown every time he made me get up at six. Next morning, he did not fail to wake and torment me, but he only received abuse. The next day he did the same with no better success, and I was obliged to confess at noon that I had lost my time. I told him he did not know how to manage his business; he ought to think of my promise and not mind my threats. The next morning he employed force, and at will dragged me out of bed, I begged for indulgence and bid him begone, I stormed but Joseph persevered, I was therefore obliged to comply, and he was rewarded every day for the abuse he suffered the moment I awoke; my thanks, accompanied by a crown, he received an hour after. Yes, I am indebted to poor Joseph for ten or a dozen of the volumes of my works."

But after all would it not have been more to Buffon's honour, though less to Joseph's advantage, had he acquired by the resolution of his own will, the habit of early rising, which he at length secured by his servant's

perseverance. A man who rises at six instead of seven, adds thirty days to each year of twelve hours each, and supposing he lives to fifty years after he commences doing so, adds four years to his life.

Economy is another habit of vast consequence to you. If this be formed in youth it will follow you through life, and upon this it will depend whether your continuance in this world be one of independence and comfort, or of disappointment, vexation, disquiet, and disgrace. An extravagant and thoughtless youth, reckless about money, has the seeds of ruin in his disposition; and without the gift of prophecy, we may any of us predict his career through life. Let your income be what it may, however small, ever live within it. Always save something and thus acquire the habit of saving. Despise the folly which ridicules prudence as a cold and heartless virtue that has no enthusiasm; and which admires a dashing kind of extravagance and thriftlessness as the mark of genius. Frugality is no mean thing; it is better to live on a little and infinitely more honourable, than to outlive a great deal. Economy requires you should be careful about your personal expenses. Dandyism and economy cannot go together; and very often the former falls out with honesty. Extravagance must have resources, and if integrity cannot supply them dishonesty will. Beware of expensive follies, such as personal decorations and fashionable luxuries. Abjure tobacco in every form; the cigar has in many cases led to the pipe, the pipe to the glass, and the glass to habits of intemperance. Spend not that upon useless articles, which you will soon want for necessary ones. Every thing is dear which you do not want, however

cheaply you may buy it. Look well to little out-goings; a whole reservoir may be drained by a few drops oozing out first, as they are continually wearing away a greater outlet. Never go in debt for a necessary article, much less for a luxury of the palate or person. At the same time, let not your economy degenerate into a love of money. Parsimony is at the other extreme of extravagance, and in avoiding the latter, some have rushed over to the other. Save to give. Be economical that you may be a philanthropist and not a miser; and as stinginess is an excrescence that often grows upon frugality, prevent its growth by the exercise of beneficence. Always save a part of your earnings and always give a part of your savings. Thus, two good habits will be always advancing together, economy and benevolence, and they will be helpful to each other, economy will provide the means of benevolence, and benevolence for its own sake the savings of economy.

Punctuality is also an excellent habit, and contributes to successful industry. Every man, barring occasional uncontrollable circumstances, may be punctual if he will, yet few are so. This is a virtue which is of essential importance to the well being of society. What a misfortune it would be if punctuality were a rare occurrence in our clocks and watches, so that they could never be depended upon for keeping right time. The business world would then be all out of joint. Why it would be little less mischievous if all men were unpunctual. The unpunctual man not only wastes his own time, but the time of other people, because the prosecution of business may depend upon his being present, and which must be stopped till he arrives. "I

have myself" say Dr. Todd, "ridden scores of miles, and been put to inconvenient expense, and a hard week's work in writing, by the want of punctuality in one, who failed only five minutes, and that unnecessarily." He relates a striking instance of punctuality in a student who was so invariably present when the lectures commenced, that on looking round and observing his absence, the Professor, on the young man's entering the room, said "Sir, the clock has struck, and we are ready to begin; but as you were absent, we supposed it was too fast, and therefore waited." The clock was actually too fast by some minutes.

The habit of Order is of great moment, also, to successful industry. Be men of method. I knew a man who often said, it seemed to him, as if some imp of mischief that delighted to torment him, always contrived to run away with the letter, paper, or book which he then wanted, and which occasioned him a fearful loss of time, and a still greater loss of temper. It was only necessary to follow him to his library and see the confused heap of papers and books which lay upon the table, and which, fretting and fuming he was tumbling over to find what he wanted, and which he could not find after all, to see who the imp was that occasioned all this trouble and vexation. Dr. Todd, speaking of Jeremiah Ewarts, a distinguished man in America, says of him,

"During years of close observation in the bosom of his family, I never saw a day pass without his accomplishing more than he expected; and so regular was he in all his habits, that I knew to a moment when I should find him with his pen, and when with his brush in his hand; and so methodical throughout, that though his papers filled many shelves, when closely tied up, there was not a paper amongst all his letters, correspondence, and editorial matters, and the like, which was not labelled and in its place, and upon which he could

not lay his hand in a moment. I never knew him search for a paper: it was always in its place. I never yet knew a man whose habits of industry were so great, or who could accomplish so much in a given time."

And who can reasonably hope to succeed in any thing whether in business or science, in art, or any other object of pursuit, without Perseverance? By perseverance I mean, sticking to one selected and necessary thing, and continuing our efforts till it is accomplished, saying, This one thing I do, and working at it till by repeated effort, and in the face of all difficulties, with rapture we can say, "I have done it, I have done it." Choose your object cautiously and wisely, and then hold it firmly, look often at it, and if it commend itself to your judgment, seize it with the grasp of a giant, and hold it with the constancy of a martyr, and you will be surprised to find how difficulties will clear away before you. "I am not unhappy," said a man who met with innumerable difficulties, discouragements, and defeats, and still persevered, "I never lose the mysterious whisper, go on." Blot the word impossibility from your vocabulary as regards all objects that may be hopefully sought by you, and yield yourself up to the inspiration of that magic monosyllable "try." You remember the story of Robert Bruce; after defeat, and in the lowest ebb of his fortunes, when reclining in some out-buildings, disheartened and half despairing, he saw a spider spinning her web, and endeavouring to fix her delicate thread upon an opposite point. Six times the little creature failed; nothing daunted, she went on with her hitherto unavailing efforts, and at the seventh was successful. Bruce moralised on the subject, learnt a lesson of perseverance from the spider, threw off his despondency, and rose up to renewed efforts, to battle

and to victory. Persevere and you will conquer, and how sweet will be the fruit that is plucked by patient perseverance to reach it!

I pass over many moral habits, such as temperance, trustfulness, honesty, honour, and benevolence, and all the domestic and social virtues, not of course because they are unimportant, for they are paramount to all I have specified, but because they are the theme of perpetual iteration in the pulpit, and because they are so obviously incumbent, so well understood, I hope, and so generally practised by you: but it is of vast consequence to you ever to remember, that those things, amidst the difficulties that sometimes and in some circumstances attend them, will all be rendered easy by repetition, till at length they become habitual.

But, young men, it would ill become me as a firm believer in the gospel which has brought life and immortality to light, and has announced so clearly and so solemnly that we are placed in this world, as in a state of discipline and probation for the next, to omit Religion, that most momentous of all concerns. Nothing in this world, either in its design, or in its results, is ultimate; all is preliminary and preparatory. We are only walking on the shore of the boundless ocean of existence. There is a far closer connection between our present and our future life than most persons imagine, or than most reflect upon. Moral habits formed in time receive, all of them, whether good or bad, the stamp of eternity, so says the book of God, and every one of us passes at the hour of death under the confirming power of that awful and irrevocable sentence, "He that is holy let him be holy still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still." Death effects no moral

change; obliterates no vice, imparts no virtue; but upon every unbroken habit of evil, as well as upon every firm habit of good, affixes the signature of these awful words, "for ever." Is it not impressive, and ought it not to impress? Is it not awful even to the terrible, that the bad man is forging fetters, and already fastening them upon his soul, which the stroke of mortality will rivet beyond the power of eternity to break or to loosen? Bad habits may be begun any day and finished in a year, which through millions of ages shall hold the miserable slave in the captivity of despair.

While on the other hand the habits of piety and morality formed on earth, shall follow the blessed spirit that has cultivated them to his mansion in the skies. All the struggles you carry on here, amongst so much opposition and so many occasional defeats, to gain habits of virtue and piety, will be all as so many efforts to put on the robes of light and glory which are to be worn in the realms of immortal life. There will be no struggle in that state. The habit now so imperfect will be consummated, and all the exercises of virtue and piety be the spontaneous acts of a soul, which will find goodness to be as easy as it is delightful. That mysterious tie which now binds act to act, and raises habit upon repetition, now needing such vigilance and such caution that it be not severed or weakened, will be infrangibly strengthened in heaven. Ponder this awful idea, write it upon your hearts, live under its influence, let it never long be absent from your minds, that you are all, always, and every where, forming habits that shall last through eternity, and the force of which shall be proclaimed by the felicities of the redeemed, or the agonies of the lost. Live, then, young men, in the fear of God, and

the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; and by patient continuance seek for glory, honour, and immortality. Acquire by earnest prayer, by a devout study of the scriptures, and by a holy observance of the sabbath, a habit of uniform and consistent piety. This will render your religion as firm in principle as it is delightful in exercise, and while it is a good habit in itself, it will be a bond of perfectness to the bundle of other good habits.

"Such habits are, in this world, a wall of defence around the soul in time of temptation and of danger. They take us under their protection, guard our interests, and conduct us into the path of safety, when reason and conscience are obscured by passion. They perform to our natures the office of a pilot in tempestuous weather. They are a power which is ever awake and ever active. When the storm is up and the billows roll, and all around is convulsion and disorder, virtuous habit retains its seat, seizes the helm, and guides us on in safety. Though every other power should sleep, though the hurricane of temptation and of passion should rage for a while, and the darkness of midnight surround us, with this for a helmsman, our tempest tossed bark may ride in security until the gale has subsided and the sunshine of reason re-appear. Our conduct, by habit, will be in conformity with the rules of prudence and virtue, even though the operation of the reflecting and moral faculties should be momentarily suspended, an event which must often happen to every member of the human family, on the thousand occasions of temptation to which he is exposed. It is a difference of established habits, or acquired tendencies, formed on a constitutional bias, in which consists the most important distinction between a wise and a morally correct man, in times of great mental agitation, and an irrational, réckless, and vicious man, under the same circumstances. In the calm which succeeds the storm, the one is able to look back on his conduct with pleasure and approbation, the other with regret and remorse."

Young men, learn from the page of history and your own observation, this most momentous lesson, and treasure it up in your memory, that it is the good habits of a people, and not their civilization and advancement in knowledge, that constitute the real

strength and conserves the greatness of a nation. How eloquently did Lord John Russell dwell on this fact, when in his lecture at Exeter Hall, to the Young Men's Christian Association, he brought his proofs from the page of history, and how ably was he supported in these views by the Times Newspaper. They both showed how impotent mere civilization is to maintain the moral power of a nation, by a reference to the Augustan era of Rome, and particular epochs of France and England. All these were stained by habits of vice; and they might have carried back their experience to Greece, "that land of lost gods and god-like men," as it has been boastfully called. The liberty of Rome perished and her empire lay prostrate, despite of her poets, her orators, and her artists. In France an infidel civilization produced such moral scandals as could be wiped out only partially even to this day, by a bloody revolution. And who can refer to the reign of our second Charles and Anne, without knowing how little wit, and learning, and poetry, and eloquence, can do, unaided by moral and religious habits, to stay the torrent of corruption and hinder the growth of scepticism? Let heaven send good harvests; let our cities resound with the hum of factories and the traffic of streets; let the earth be covered with our railways, and the ocean with our ships; yea, let science make its discoveries, literature its triumphs, art its inventions, and taste its decorations; let the salt of life which consists of good habits be wanting; let voluptuousness corrupt the rich, and intemperance degrade the poor; let the moral sense of our young men be blunted by bad habits: and then all that should have become our strength will become our weakness; cities, factories,

railways, electric telegraphs, commerce, science, and art, every thing of which an Englishman is accustomed to boast, passes over to the camp of destruction, and obstructs that moral and political progress of which it seems to be the chief means. Immorality whether public or private, if it spread through society, and especially through the rising generation, will be a canker to all that is great, glorious, and free, in this noble nation, and England's flag, floating so loftily and proudly, will be dragged down into the mud, and trampled under foot by a swinish generation: and Lord John Russell has read a good lesson to this, a self-flattering and self-indulgent age, when he points out that nothing is to be done and no progress is to be made, without good moral habits. "Whether," says the Times, "all the young men who heard him that night thought this more than so much sermonising we know not, but if they live long enough they will find it all true to their pleasure or their cost."

If therefore young men your own personal well-being be not enough both for time and eternity, to lead you to a determination to cultivate habits of industry and prudence, morality and religion, let patriotism add its weight, and as you would not see England's star go down for ever, and her greatness and her glory depart to return no more, form and cherish those habits which are the strongest basis of her liberties, and the surest guardians of her laws, her institutions, and her peace.

END OF THE THIRTEENTH VOLUME.

Hudson and Son, Printers, Bull Street, Birmingham.

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